University of Alberta

A Study of the Edmonton Public Schools Principalship Training and Development Course

by

Brady Holland

A thesis submitted to the faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Educational Administration and Leadership.

Department of Educational Policy Studies

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examines the practical outcomes of the Edmonton Public Schools Principalship Training and Development Course. The purpose of the program is to identify, select, and train aspiring administrators. Candidates participated in the program to learn about the principalship within the district, develop professionally and to strengthen their opportunities of securing an administrative position. Using a semi-structured interview method for the data collection, this interpretive field study focuses on the perceived importance of direct and indirect outcomes of the development program. The participants viewed the program as very effective although a number of modifications were suggested. Based on this study it is recommended that the program be continued with some modifications to the content, expectations and structure. It is further recommended that the program components be evaluated and updated on a regular basis to maintain their relevancy.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction to the Study

The Principalship Training and Development Course is designed and used by Edmonton Public Schools to prepare and identify potential administrators. It is a 20-week course conducted on Tuesday evenings and four Saturdays over approximately five months.

The main topics covered during the course were: (a) student achievement, (b) student conduct, (c) staff performance and attitudes, (d) parent and community attitudes, (e) finances, (f) physical assets, (g) the district perspective, and (h) critical self-appraisal. Principals were assigned to a mentor during their first year in administration as part of the program. School and District Services staff and school principals worked together to develop and present the sessions. This development also included the design, presentation and evaluation of assignments. The first offering of the course was conducted during the 1995/1996 school year. The purpose of this investigation is to identify the application strengths of the 1995/1996 Edmonton Public Schools Principal Training and Development Course.

Because the first offering of the course was during the 1995/1996 school year there has yet to be any research that examines the perceptions or reflections of course participants. Participants who were assigned to a principalship for the 1996/1997 school year are thus the first available group of administrators to have completed one full year in administration after completing the development course. Those participants who completed the 1996/1997

program would have only been able to reflect upon the initial 8 months of their first principalship. Those participants assigned to a principalship in 1996/1997 are presently completing their second year of administration and are able to reflect upon their complete first year of experiences as a beginning principal. This provides the reason for choosing the 1995/1996 program participants for this study.

Identification of the Research Problem

This study was designed to identify those areas of the principalship training and development course that principals considered to be most beneficial in helping them become effective administrators in their first year in the position. This knowledge can be used in the continued improvement of principalship training programs. Six specific questions have guided the inquiry.

1. Which aspects of the program's curriculum content were most beneficial?
2. Which teaching methodologies used during the training sessions were most effective?
3. How helpful was the mentorship partnership? What aspects were crucial for its success?
4. One aspect of the course that is not overtly stated as an objective is the networking that transpires. Did the introduction to experts in specific areas or to practicing principals serve as a benefit after completion of the program?
5. There were also a number of assignments throughout the course. Are these assignments applicable to what is being taught during instructional time? Are they appropriate in practically preparing participants for administrative

positions?

6. Which aspects of the program have served to be most beneficial in preparing the participant for administrative practice?

Specifically the study focused on one major research question: What aspects of the training and development course are identified as being most beneficial in preparing a course participant for personally perceived success as a beginning principal.

Description of Terms

Principal – A presently employed full time principal who graduated from the 1995/1996 program and completed a first year as a principal in 1996/1997. It is used interchangeably with administrator, participant and respondent.

Course – The Edmonton Public Schools principalship training and development course that began during the 1995/1996 school year. It is used interchangeably with program.

Significance of the Study

The ultimate goal in education is meeting students' needs and fostering student growth and achievement. Research that contributes to the improvement of the preparation of professionals who work within the education system enhances the systems ability to reach this goal. The results of this study will benefit the district, course participants and principalship training and development programs.

The district will benefit as course components are confirmed, modified, or changed. Feedback from past course participants who have put into practice the information learned throughout the course will influence the programs evolution so that it may better meet the needs of its participants. Thus, principals who

have completed the program will be better equipped for their first year as a principal. Increasing the effectiveness of principals performance through a training and development program will result in an increase in the effectiveness of schools throughout the district. "It is generally accepted that effective schools are lead by effective principals" (Edmonton Public Schools Superintendent's Performance Review Process of 70 Principals, 1997, p.3). An effective program will better prepare administrators, which will benefit teachers as well as students.

The results of this study will also benefit course participants. It is crucial that changes are made in response to the insights provided through the reflection of program participants. Stelck (1997) stresses that the content of a program must keep pace with changes and be continually evaluated for relevance. Through the analysis of participants' responses course content and objectives can be strengthened, modified or changed to better meet the needs of those it is designed for. The relevancy of the course will be enhanced as it is modified through the feedback of past participants who have put their training into practice.

This research may assist in the development of future training programs as it will identify the areas of training that principals feel to be of greatest necessity. Research that outlines the strengths of a principalship training program will contribute to theories about administrative training. This study has identified, clarified or strengthened those areas that principals identify to be an integral part of administrative training.

As a district strengthens the preparation of its administrators each level of

the education system, from the superintendent's office, to the board, the principal, the teacher, the parent and ultimately the student will benefit.

Researcher Beliefs

I believe that the role of the principal is crucial to the success of staff, and ultimately students, within a school. The principal is key in developing an educational environment where all learners will experience growth to maximize their individual potential. I believe that the expectations and subsequently the skills necessary to be a successful principal are increasing under the influence of the Alberta Education mandate to institute site-based management. Because of the changes that are taking place within the educational environment, combined with a majority of principals becoming eligible to retire, there is a pressing need to develop administrators who are competent, informed and skilled in providing the leadership necessary for students and staff to experience success. It is through the evaluation and study of principal preparation that theories can be confirmed and constructive changes made to better the preparation of school leaders.

It is my belief that the principals' job is changing. There are growing responsibilities resulting from changes in law, the structure of the education system, society and schools. A number of prominent areas of change seem to involve finances, site-based decision making, student rights, program diversity and accountability to the public. This study will help to recognize those areas of initial learning that are of most benefit for new principals. Improvements in the effectiveness of preparations for a first year principal will result in an increased

ability to more effectively respond to the needs of students and teachers.

Assumptions

There are several assumptions implicit in this methodology. First, based on the literature as well as personal experience it is assumed that a principal takes on a leadership role in their school, and that each administrator will understand and undergo leadership experiences differently.

Secondly, it is assumed that the participants' personal perceptions of success are based upon their ability to demonstrate the duties outlined for a principal in the School Act as well as the Edmonton Public Schools Administrative handbook. (Appendix A)

It is also assumed that the principals are willing to share their experiences and perceptions with candor and honestly.

Fourthly, it is assumed that a descriptive and interpretive study is an appropriate design through which the principals' perceptions and experiences may be explored.

Delimitations of the Study

This study was designed specifically for one school district and is reflective of the experiences of six participants from within that district. Thus, outside of this specific program and experiences the findings are only as applicable as the reader interprets them to be.

These findings are also delimited to the time of the study (April and May 1998). The administrators' reflections included their experiences during the 1996/1997 school year, and may or may not include influences from the first 8

months of the 1997/1998 school year.

Thus, the study is delimited to one school district and a chosen selection of principals who provided reflections from a specific time within that district.

Limitations of the Study

There are a number of potential limitations. This study relies on the memories and personal perceptions of the respondents. These perceptions may have changed over time, or they may have changed throughout the interview. Efforts were made to minimize this limitation by having course materials and a course outline available for reference throughout the interview process.

The individual histories of the respondents may affect the results. Something may have occurred after committing to the study, but before the interview, that may have affected a participants' response.

A limitation exists with respect to the interview method since interviews cannot be completely standardized. The interviews are only as consistent and productive as the participant and interviewer decide during the process. My ability to develop trust with the respondents as well as my ability to consistently ask appropriate questions may have limited the responses. This did not to seem be a limitation as participants stated their willingness to share their thoughts openly.

As a researcher I am aware that my own experiences and biases will influence my understanding and interpretation of the principals' reflections. An awareness of this bias was kept in mind during the interviews as well as throughout the analysis of the data. It is assumed that my inexperience in

administrative duties, having never been a principal, will further decrease the influence of my own views. In a sense, all a participant shares is interpreted at face value because I have only recently begun to develop "principal" filters through which I practice, interpret and view the role of the principal.

My own skills and abilities to prepare, conduct, analyze and report this research are limitations that may have influenced the findings.

Overview of the Thesis

This first chapter has introduced the research question and questions followed by the significance of the study, which lead to the assumptions, researcher's beliefs, delimitations and limitations.

The second chapter contains a review of the literature and previous research, followed by a synthesis in relation to the study. An explication of the methodology is provided in chapter three. Chapter four presents the findings through presentation of the participants' reflections and experiences. Chapter five discusses the major themes revealed through the participants' responses and provides an overview of the study through summary, interpretation and conclusion sections.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Synthesis of the Literature

In examining the literature to see what is being written about the world of the principal it becomes increasingly apparent that leadership development programming needs to respond to the changes in the education system. It is vital for districts to take appropriate steps to ensure that these new administrators are competent in providing the leadership that the staff and students need, and that the parents and district expect. Through this review of the literature a number of relevant concepts will be examined: (a) the demographic reality, (b) the changing role of the teacher, (c) the changing role of the principal, (d) the evolution of the definition of educational leadership and (e) the rationale for examining training programs.

The Demographic Reality

The need for pretraining programs is growing as more school districts recognize that a large percentage of their experienced school administrators are approaching retirement age. "National surveys conducted by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) have consistently shown that within the next few years more than half the principals in the United States will be able to retire" (Daresh & Playko, 1997, p.2). Ginty (1995) stresses the importance of this demographic trend stating that the success of the school administrator is critical to the excellence of tomorrow's schools and students. He

reinforces his statement by drawing the conclusion that with an estimated 60 percent of principals who will reach retirement age by the year 2000, combined with the challenges of school leadership, it is reasonable to assume that many inexperienced administrators will fail unless they receive support during the critical first year.

School districts within Alberta are having to face this reality as well. Of ten districts surveyed, the percentages of principals eligible to retire within the next ten years are as follows: 46%, 55%, 57%, 58%, 59%, 60%, 60%, 60%, 88%, and 94%. A number of school districts are having to face the immediacy of this demographic reality. One central office reported that 27 percent of principals within the district would retire this summer.

These demographic facts could lead to the problem of having a significant number of administrators retiring in a relatively short period. Buckner and Jones (1990) state that the urgent need to recruit, train, and nurture new principals is amplified by studies that report up to half the nation's principals will be eligible for retirement within the next five years. An influx of inexperienced school principals and assistant principals would follow. This situation could lead to problems in the provision of some degree of continuity and stability within schools and districts. To address this situation, some school districts have adopted proactive policies and are offering early retirement incentives to near-retirement age administrators, thus creating opportunities for aspiring administrators (Stelk, 1997). These proactive approaches combined with the demographics of those in principalship positions have created the situation in which school districts must

identify, select, and train potential leaders. Morise (1990) states that graduate level preparations for the principalship alone is not sufficient, nor should it be required to stand alone. Ratsoy, Richards, Haughey and Maynes (1992) reported that officials from the Alberta Department of Education have expressed concerns about the development of future school administrators. A number of these were: (a) capacity make decisions, (b) ability to work with boards, (c) commitment to foster positive results for children, (d) capacity to envision what a school or school system should be or would be and (e) understand the dynamics of organizations and change, and a willingness to change. The National Association of Elementary School Principals (1990) concluded:

> We can no longer afford to simply rely on the passive practice of simply trusting to fate in the hope that the needed kinds of people will somehow decide to become principals. We need a system of reaching out to teachers who show promise as leaders and encourage them to pursue careers in administration. This system should be a collaborative effort by colleges and universities, local school districts, and professional associations of school administrators (NASSP, 1990, p. 21).

There is a growing need within school districts to proactively respond to this demographic reality.

The Changing Role of the Teacher

The need for administrative training is compounded by the fact that the educational environment is experiencing an accelerating metamorphosis. A specific change within the educational environment has been the evolution of the role of the teacher. The teaching profession is changing. Bjork and Ginsberg (1995) underscored the importance of the school principal in creating a supportive reform environment and concurred that without the assistance of

school administrators, significant and lasting reform would be unlikely. They concluded that:

> Teaching is undergoing a transformation from a routine job conducted with craft-like knowledge, in isolation from other adults in a hierarchical status structure; to a new perception, which views teaching as a non-routine activity drawing on a reliable body of technical knowledge and conducted in collaboration with other professional colleagues. (Leithwood, Begley, and Cousins,1992, p. 126)

An understanding of these changes is essential for administrators. The school principal plays a leading role in the development of an effective school. Given this leadership role, focusing attention on professional preparation of school administrators is justified (Manasse, 1982 cited in Kowalchuk, 1989).

As teachers experience a transformation, aspects of the principal's role and position will be also be transformed. Milstein, Bobroff, and Restine (1991) concluded that "it is not an exaggeration to say that the ability to provide meaningful experiences for tomorrow's educational leaders can have a profound effect on the future of education and, ultimately, on the health of our society in general" (p. 117). Maynes, McIntosh and Mappin (1992) report that the renewed interest in principalship preparation has been partly in response to the large number of influential studies that have made convincing claims that the principalship is the most important strategic role for school improvement.

Taylor (1995) maintained that considerable cultural and social distance exists between students and teachers. It is vitally important for principals to be fully informed of the transformation that is happening in the teaching profession. This awareness will strengthen the principals' ability to be an instructional leader in providing direction that will be of maximum benefit to teachers, and ultimately

students.

To be an effective school leader it is vital that a principal have an understanding of the changes that teachers are experiencing.

The Changing Role of the Principal

The educational environment for administrators is also changing. Fullan (1998) describes how very different the school environment is today compared to even five years ago:

> The walls of the school have come tumbling down, metaphorically speaking. "Out there" is now "in here" as government policy, parent and community demands, corporate interests, and ubiquitous technology have all stormed the walls of the school. The relentless pressures of today's complex environments have intensified overload. (Fullan, 1998, p. 6)

Stelck (1997) concluded that much literature addresses the changing expectations and demands on school administrators and lists some of the current topics to be: decentralized administration, site-based management, comprehensive school restructuring, and teacher empowerment. Taylor (1995) points to the growing emphasis on moral dimensions, multicultural education, demographic changes, geographic evolutions, and moral shifts. Rallis and Highsmith (1987) in addressing their observation that most principals hold degrees in administration, not advanced degrees in teaching or curriculum or philosophy of education, conclude that most principals are trained as managers and are simply not prepared to meet the schools' need for instructional leadership.

As the role and definition of educational leadership evolves it is necessary that programs that prepare principals stay relevant and current.

The Evolution of the Definition of Educational Leadership

Common characteristics of inservice programs need to be linked to a general understanding of educational leadership. In recent years, there has been increased awareness of the importance of the school principal. It is generally accepted that effective schools are led by effective principals.

However, little effort has been directed at the improvement of the way people have been made ready for this critical educational role. "More research is needed concerning what is done in practice so that this information can be incorporated into leadership programs" (Glasman & Glasman, 1997, p. 17). The choice of material in an educational program is influenced by the evolution of the definition of educational leadership. Leadership theory is beginning to shift from what leaders do, to what they accomplish, recognizing that people can accomplish the same thing in different ways. Snyder and Johnson (1985) concluded that principals at all levels perceive that they are virtually unprepared for their jobs today as they shift from administration to productive school management.

Programs are becoming more functional in their approaches to training. This process towards functionalism needs to be grounded in theory and research. Daresh and Playko (1994) state that there has been little attention directed towards the identification of skills presumed to be important by aspiring school administrators. In their 1994 study, experienced and aspiring administrators responded to a critical skills survey. The researchers discovered that four major issues appeared as a result of the analysis. First, experienced

principals rated the skill of determining "who is what in a school setting" as most critical for beginning principals. This was followed closely by "establishing a positive and cooperative rapport with other administrators in the district." The lowest ranking skills were clustered in the technical category and consisted of items such as managing food services, custodial, and secretary staff. Conversely aspiring administrators rated technical skills such as "how to develop a school budget" and "awareness of issues related to local school law" as most critical. Self-awareness items such as "portraying a sense of self-confidence on the job" were rated lowest. Some of the implications discovered in this study were that great discrepancies appear to exist between experienced and aspiring principals concerning the skills assumed to be important for effective job performance. Specifically, aspiring administrators place a much higher value on the demonstration of technical skills. Experienced administrators believed it is more important for newcomers to show they are being socialized effectively.

> This study asked people to indicate the kinds of skills needed by practicing principals at this time. It may be interesting to find out if the skills described as important here would change drastically if programs such as widespread site-based management became more frequently adopted. In such schemes, the role of the principal becomes more involved with broader managerial duties such as the development of community relations, budgeting, personnel selection, and so forth. It must be assumed that, under such circumstances, the "critical skills for all principals beginning or experienced, would change." (Daresh & Playko, 1994, p. 44)

In 1983, the Alberta School Trustees Association conducted a series of workshops on the role of the principal. Principals, vice-principals, teachers, superintendents, and trustees all participated. Unruh and Johnson from the University of Calgary conducted the evaluation of the workshops. Areas of

responsibility for the principal that were studied and discussed included: job description, leadership, staff relationships, evaluation of teacher performance, discipline, community-school leadership, instruction and curriculum development, finance and business management, and school plant operation. There were three recommendations made:

1. There is a need for an in-service program for principals
2. Instrumentation, data collection, and analysis plans need to be developed for the monitoring of systems
3. Time and resources remain as concerns with no apparent solutions.

Taylor and Edward (1995) state that it is necessary to compose a view of leadership to balance the emphasis on rationality, since school leadership involves the development of relationships and the resolution of moral dilemmas. They assert that administrators can and must be leaders; administrator preparation is about the preparation of leaders (Taylor & Edward, 1995).

Leadership is a construct that must be dismantled and rebuilt, not simply adjusted and fine tuned. Bradshaw and Buckner (1994) indicate that the principals in the most successful schools motivated the entire community and were willing to share leadership success. This success is traced to specific attributes and skills that make them effective. Announcing a policy is not enough. Skills specific to bring about significant changes need to be developed. Examples of these are the ability to: (a) give meaningful feedback, (b) plan, (c) be a member of a team, (d) gather resources, (e) deal with resistance to change, and (f) launch an initiative (Bradshaw & Buckner, 1994).

As the definition of educational leadership evolves, the role of the principal evolves also. Expectations are changing. The role of the principal is diversifying and preparation programs need to respond.

The Rationale for Examining Training Programs

Just because a program addresses a need does not guarantee its effectiveness. Daresh (1997) states that serving as a school principal will continue to be a rewarding, but extremely difficult and demanding job. Consequently, there is a critical need for strategies that will better prepare individuals for the principalship. Traditional courses are not sufficient and merely adding a few "practical" experiences in the field will not fix the shortcomings of preparation programs.

> There is a need for evaluation and feedback pertaining to a training program so that relevant decisions can be made about the program's elements, content, and objectives. Information gained through research will provide a rationale for making decisions about the modifications and changes that guarantee the continued integrity and relevance of the program itself. (Milstein, Bobroff, & Restine, 1991, p. 116)

The use of principalship training programs within districts is a necessary tool in providing training for potential administrators. Daresh (1990) states that it was recognized long ago that something beyond the completion of campus-based graduate courses in school administration were needed to help people as they prepared to take on principalships and superintendencies. In addition too traditional coursework, people need some type of practical, field-based learning (Daresh, 1990). He continues by stressing that within these situations students could learn about administration from "real people" in the "real world."

While there have not been many studies carried out regarding the needs

of first year administrators, we have some fairly consistent pictures of the problems that are normally faced by beginners. The educational change that school districts are experiencing is placing new demands on principals. "Typical current school leadership programs are woefully inadequate, given present expectations anticipated for schools and leaders -- never mind the considerably more ambitious expectations anticipated for schools of the future" (Leithwood, Begley, & Cousins, 1992, p. 27). Evaluation and feedback from past participants, specific to practical applications is paramount in the effective restructuring of a program. "It is likely that internship programs will have to be constructed, reviewed, dismantled, rebuilt, and redesigned with frustrating regularity if they are to be effective" (Milstein, Bobroff, & Restine, 1991).

Richardson, Cline, Prickett and Flanigan (1989) argue that the stereotyped view of the principal as an administrative manager will not be sufficient to meet both the current and future demands for instructional leadership. They point out that one main rationale for change is the research that shows the corroboration between the interdependence of skilled administrators and student achievement.

Daresh and Playko (1989) expressed that there are a number of consistent themes that can be found throughout the research that have obvious implications for the ways in which individuals might be better prepared to take on leadership roles in schools. The first is that people should receive a good deal of "hands-on" learning of administrative tasks. Secondly, entry year or induction programs need to stress the development of "strong norms of collegiality within

those who are taking their first administrative hobs so that there can be a realization that a school administrator is not necessarily paid to know all the answers and will rarely be effective by trying to go it alone" (1989, p. 13). Third, entry year programs must include a component where people are able to test their fundamental assumptions and beliefs concerning the nature of power, authority, and leadership as they step into a principalship or some other administrative role.

Daresh (1986) in his study of first and second year principals in a Midwestern state classified typical problems into three areas: (a) role clarification, (b) limitations on technical expertise, and (c) difficulties with socialization to the profession and to a particular school system. From the study four implications concerning principals' inservice and continuing professional development needs were apparent.

1. Principals need a better type of practicum to let them actually experience the world of administration before they take their first job.
2. Specialized inservice administrator training needs to focus on law, school finance, teacher evaluation procedures, computer applications, and other issues of daily practical concerns.
3. New principals need more collegial support.
4. Principals need patient mentors available to talk about job concerns.

The need for principalship training and development is clear. The demographic reality combined with the changing role of both teachers and principals, which have both cause and effect influences on the evolution of the

definition of educational leadership, clearly identifies the need for principalship training and development. It is equally as clear that training and development programs need to be evaluated and examined to assess their relevance and effectiveness in providing what beginning administrators need. "Evaluation lets us know how close we have come to meeting our purposes and provides the information needed to make decisions that can improve our performance" (Milstein, Bobroff, & Restine, 1991, p. 101).

Review of Previous Research

A number of school districts in both the United States and Canada have started to address the need for in-service programs. Stelk (1997) reviewed the Elk Island Schools' Administrators for Tomorrow Program. The AFT program has been offered biannually since 1989. Her study led to five principal findings, each with specific implications for improving the existing program. The third recommendation addresses the reasoning behind the motivation to examine the Edmonton Public Schools Leadership Program: "Given this new reality (rapidly changing duties of administrators), the content of the AFT must keep pace with these changes and be continually evaluated for relevance" (Stelk, 1997, p. 45). In her study Stelck (1997) reviewed five training and selection programs and found two features that were consistently present: (a) a need to link theory to practice and (b) the need to provide experimental learning experiences.

Daresh and Playko (1989) outlined the successful reform of the Kentucky State Department of Education's administrative programs. Candidates entering this program are required to possess a master's degree and a standard teaching

certificate. The primary ingredients for the program are included in five phases: program admission, formal course work, testing, the opportunity for supervised practice and demonstration of competence, and mentoring. Daresh and Playko (1989) also describe how the needs of the first year principal have been met in Ohio through the development and implementation of the Entry Year Standard Program. There was no "entry year model" that was to be mandated across the state and thus school systems were to look at their own needs, characteristics, and priorities as a way to devise programs that fit the needs of their particular districts.

Richardson, Cline, Prickett and Flanigan (1989) report the five strands or program requirements to be included in administrator preparation programs outlined by the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration. These areas are (a) the study of administration, (b) the study of the technical core of educational administration, and the acquisition of vital administrative skills, (c) the application of research findings and methods to problems, (d) supervised practice, and (e) demonstration of competence. The NASSP identified 12 skills essential for success in the principalship. The 12 areas are: problem analysis, judgment, organizational ability, decisiveness, leadership, sensibility, stress tolerance, oral communication, written communication, range of interest, personal motivation, and educational values.

Behaviors that characterize the practice of leadership should be the focus of the training programs for educational leaders. The Report of the National Commission of Excellence in Educational Administration (1987) in the United

States noted "troubling aspects throughout the field, including ... lack of preparation programs relevant to the job demands of school administrators, lack of sequence, modern content, and clinical experiences, in preparation programs"(pp. 26-27). Tanner, Keddy and Galis (1995) determined that because preparation programs are often criticized as being irrelevant to the actual demands of school administrators the theory movement of the 1950s and 1960s is giving way to a more clinical approach that emphasizes the acquisition of administrative skills. Bjork, Lars and Ginsberg (1995) maintain that after the release of A NATION AT RISK in 1983 the United States sustained an educational reform debate of unprecedented magnitude and duration throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s. Although, initial educational reforms focused on improving curriculum and classroom instruction, several essential reports brought attention to the issue of the importance of school administrators in facilitating change (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986; Homes Group, 1986).

Daresh (1997) declares that because good schools need good leaders, more effective approaches are needed to prepare people to be school principals. He outlines 10 recommended practices that have been suggested to make educational leadership preparation programs more effective. Learning on the job would be guided by an ongoing vision of professional growth and development. Preservice preparation should be viewed as only a first step toward becoming an effective leader.

1. Preservice programs should emphasize the development of reflective skills.

Principal preparation programs are now increasingly asking students to think about their underlying assumptions and the beliefs that guide their actions.

2. Preparation programs should help people acquire skills as moral and ethical leaders.

It is critical for principals and others to accomplish their jobs in a fair, ethical, and moral fashion.

3. Principles of adult learning should guide practice in preparation programs.

Teachers, parents, staff members, community representatives -- all are the population with whom the principal comes into most direct and frequent contact. Many principal preparation programs devote at least part of their time and energy to teaching future school leaders about andragogy, the art and science of working with adults.

4. Curricula should be coherent, integrative, and sequenced in a logical fashion.

Some attention is being paid to the identification, at least, of those courses that should serve as core experiences in the educational administration preparation curriculum.

5. Greater emphasis should be placed on learning about teaching and learning processes in schools.

Research has shown that schools in which the principal tends to focus on instructional improvement tend to be more effective. There has been an increase in the focus on the inclusion of more learning experiences directed toward helping future school administrators recognize the need to oversee the

teaching-learning activities in their schools as their primary area of attention and responsibility.

6. Opportunity for more clinical learning should be made available to aspiring principals.

    There is no substitute for spending time in the field, watching and working with school principals on the job. Learning in clinical settings can and should take place throughout the learning experience.

7. Experienced administrators should serve as mentors to aspiring leaders.
8. Aspiring principals should proceed toward their goals in cohorts.

    People learn better when they join together and form learning communities. Collaborative learning strategies have been implemented to achieve common goals.

9. Authentic assessment techniques should be used to track student progress.

    Gradually, we see efforts being made to verify real world skill demonstrations by future administrators, rather than the ability to write about theoretical applications.

10. Preservice preparation is viewed as only part of a bigger picture of professional development.

Buckner and Jones (1990) state that the time has come to take a hard look at how principals are prepared and developed. Their opinion is that the education system can no longer depend upon informal mentor/coach relationships to provide the atmosphere needed for the development of tomorrow's school administrators.

> When compared with the time, personnel, and money the business sector pours into recruiting and training candidates for management positions, the recruitment and development of school principals are meager and haphazard. We must invest more time and care in assessing and developing our educational leaders, for they hold our nation's future in their hands (Buckner and Jones, 1990, p. 20)

In a study of six first year principals Ginty (1995) makes recommendations in a number of areas of professional development. These recommendations focus on academic preparation in relation to: developing a personal vision for educational leadership, shaping organizations, understanding people, understanding environments, using inquiry.

Milstein and Krueger (1997) report that in the United States the recognition of the need to improve leadership in schools was initiated by the 1983 report A Nation at Risk. The University Council for Educational Administration, which represents many of the leading higher education leadership preparation programs, highlighted a number of concerns when it established the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration (1987). The conclusions were that preparation programs were "marked" by a lack of a definition of good educational leadership, lack of collaboration between school districts and universities, lack of systemic professional development for school administrators and a lack of sequence, modern content, and clinical experiences.

Successful leadership preparation programs are those that pay attention to the key program elements that must be fostered if meaningful improvements are to be introduced and, as important, institutionalized: readiness for program change, recruitment and selection of students, academic offerings and teachings

strategies, learning in cohorts, and resource acquisition.

Kowalchuk (1989) follows Lusthau's (1982) identification of three types of training programs: formal, non-formal, and informal. Formal training is institutionally based programs leading to a degree, non-formal is planned educational activities that do not lead to a degree and informal is composed of one's daily experiences. Kowalchuk (1989) found in his research that the traditional route to a principalship based on success as a teacher or being previously appointed a vice-principalship was ineffective. He references a survey of vice-principals by Norton and Kriekard (1987) that found that most vice-principals felt they had an inadequate amount of training in the areas of school management, instruction, personnel, community relations and student activities to be effective in their position. "To ensure that the vice-principalship provides an opportunity for potential administrators to develop competency skills important to effective administration would require that the parameters of the vice-principalship be provincially defined" (Norton and Kriekard, 1987, p.17). Kowalchuk (1989, pp.5-10) also found that there are two views concerning appropriate program content. First there are those who favor the "intellectual development of administrators and are concerned with scholarly inquiry and abstraction." Secondly there are those who favor the "development of pragmatic administrative skills particularly geared to the work of administrators" (pp.5-6). Kowalchuk (1989) continues by stating there is no single approach that provides comprehensive training to ready prospective administrators.

> It is possible that a certain approach to training is appropriate for the development of a specific competency, so that a comprehensive training

> program would be made up of a number of training approaches. Given this, one must then focus on the content of an administrative training program by examining the question of what competencies are essential to effective administration. (Kowalchuk, 1989, p.21-22)

He concludes by suggesting that soliciting the opinions of practicing administrators is a good way to determine what the content of an administrative training program should be. This has been uncritically accepted as a valid way to determine program content, he notes, but: "In order for the administrator certification program to play a highly valuable role in the formation of school administrators, an ongoing needs analysis must be conducted which will help to determine program content" (Kowalchuk, 1989, p.88).

Leithwood (1988) in his study of a program offered through the Centre for Principal Development at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education explains that no program prototype can be implemented with "fidelity" as institutional and regional differences in the contexts for offering certification programs are too large to warrant such an intention.

This examination of the previous research has perpetuated the need for the continual evaluation of principalship training programs

Synthesis

The review of the literature as well as an examination of previous research has demonstrated that beginning principals need to be provided with specific training. Along with the acquisition of managerial skills principals need to develop the ability to think through issues from a base of understanding about their changing role within an evolving environment. In examining the previous research and literature on the principalship one theme is dominant and provides

the basis for this study. It is the need to examine and evaluate training and development programs so that meaningful improvements can be made.

CHAPTER 3

The Method of the Study

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the perceived practical outcomes of the 1995/1996 Edmonton Public Schools Leadership development program. The program was designed to identify and train potential school administrators. The program started on Tuesday January 11, 1996 and concluded on Tuesday May 30, 1996. The course ran on Tuesday evenings for a total of 19 evening sessions. There were also four Saturday sessions held once each month from February to May. The methods in this study used were consistent with an interpretivist or naturalistic approach to research. This chapter addresses five areas: (a) research design, (b) participants, (c) data collection, (d) data analysis and (e) trustworthiness.

Research Design

This interpretative study was based on the understandings and assumptions of both the researcher and the participants. A naturalistic study is based on constructivist assumptions. While experiences may be common, each person present will interpret the situation uniquely because of experience and personality. Such understandings are considered true for the individuals involved and can potentially influence their understanding of future events. Further the researcher and participants will influence each other in their negotiation of the understanding of these events. Since I was seeking participants' understandings of particular parts of the program I used six semi-structured interviews to obtain

their opinions and recollections.

Participants

The participants involved in this study are school administrators who graduated from the Leadership Development program. The accessible population consisted of 16 administrators who completed the program in the spring and started their first principalship in the fall of 1996. The assistant to the superintendent, who had spearheaded and was organizing the program, supplied a list of these principals' names to the researcher.

Although each person's story will be unique I thought that those with similar backgrounds and placements might respond similarly to aspects of the program. The need to obtain "thick" feedback from participants with varying characteristics was prioritized over random selection. Hence I purposively selected potential candidates with varying characteristics from the list provided. Gender, education, leadership experience, level of school, school location, and school achievement results were factors considered in selecting potential participants. Of the six participants two had less than 10 years teaching experience, while another two had graduate degrees. A number of candidates also had previous experience as assistant principals.

The initial six individuals were faxed an introductory letter of consent inviting them to participate in the research (Appendix B). The interview schedule was also attached to provide the principal with further insights into the focus of the study (Appendix C). I then contacted each of the principals by phone to ask if they were willing to participate and whether they had any further questions about

the study.

All of the initial six candidates agreed to be interviewed. During our initial phone conversation to book interview dates, participants were also asked to bring their course materials to the interview. It was explained that these materials could be used to refer to, in order to confirm or strengthen participant's reflections. Of the six participants interviewed, five had their course materials available. Only two referenced their materials during the interview. The other participants found the course outline that listed the topics, dates, and presenters' name(s) an adequate stimulant in remembering what had transpired.

It was anticipated that this group of six participants would provide enough information that an adequate level of theoretical saturation would be reached. To protect the subjects from any potential harm no specific information about their personal life, previous experience, or present position has been provided. Special attention was given to not provide any distinguishing pieces of information that could potentially be used to identify the participants.

Pilot Study

To increase the validity of the interviews a pilot interview was done. A portion of it was transcribed and then analyzed. I had previously established a relationship with a principal whom I later discovered had been appointed to a principalship position after completing the course. Although we had met only a few times our common energy and openness soon established a friendly rapport. I assumed that because of the rapport we had developed, the post-interview feedback on potential changes that I could make would be openly honest, and

possibly rather blunt. Also, the person had offered their assistance previously when it became known that I was studying principalship training.

A brief paper was written that outlined the strengths of the pilot interview and suggested potential modifications. This paper, along with the interview schedule, was evaluated by a course instructor in research design. A number of changes were made to the order of the questions as a result of this assignment. Also, because this initial interview lasted approximately 2 hours it was learned that specific questions and statements would need to be used to keep the respondent focused on providing information specific to the study. Thus, the interview method became fairly structured because it was necessary to touch on each of the course components with each of the respondents, so that each content area of the course was touched upon. There were some additional open-ended questions added to the beginning and conclusion of the interview to allow respondents the opportunity to make general comments.

Data Collection

The semi-structured interview method was the basis for data collection and the researcher was the primary instrument. Four of the interviews took place in the principals' office while the others were held at the Education Centre in Edmonton.

Each interview was audiotaped. A set of questions, developed by the researcher, was used to guide the interview (Appendix B). They covered three areas: (a) the participant's background and expectations, (b) comments on aspects of the program, and (c) reflections and advice. This format, which moves

from program specifics to reflection, was meant to be a guide to aid the respondent in remembering the specifics of the program and to provide a frame for the principals' thoughts about expectations, benefits and recommendations. Both probing and open-ended questions were used. A few minutes were spent at the start of each interview to answer any final questions that the participant may have had and to allow for the opportunity to have a brief discussion to familiarize the participant with my personal reasoning for doing the research. The interview schedule was designed so that participants provided information that was in response to each of the six guiding questions. Questions were asked about the course curriculum, pedagogy, mentorship, networking, assignments, and general reflections. A general question about overall benefits of the course was asked at the beginning as well as the end of the interview. This was in effort to collect participants immediate program reflections without much memory prompting at the start, and then to also collect reflections at the end. I was able to then look over the general responses and see if recollections had changed after reviewing their experiences in the program. None of the responses experienced any significant change, most only became more detailed.

Of all the interviews only one principal had incorrectly scheduled our interview time. Upon my arrival the individual was slightly surprised and then stated that we would still hold the interview that afternoon. One interview was interrupted three times, another twice, and another once. These interruptions were often related to a serious school situation that needed an immediate answer although none seemed to affect the flow or concentration of the

respondents' reflections.

To help with the recollection of information a course outline was used that listed the dates and presenters' names for each of the sessions. This seemed to aid participants more than their personal notes because they often remembered the people before the content. Once they recalled who the presenter was, the information presented and the pedagogy used seemed much clearer in their minds.

A general question relating to their perceptions of what aspects of the course were most beneficial was asked both at the start and at the end of the interview. This provided the respondents' perceptions before reflecting on all of the aspects of the course that they had experienced, as well as the perceptions after they had reviewed what they had learned and experienced. Through all six interviews, emergent themes developed between the participants' general perceptions stated at the beginning and again at the end of the interview.

Before analysis of the data began each of the participants was provided with a transcript of their interview and the opportunity for them to reflect upon what they had said and request changes. No changes were requested.

Data Analysis

The data as a whole was open coded to detect emerging themes from the interviews. The method used was consistent with the coding described by Berg (1998). "The systematic analysis of ethnographic data typically begins by reading the field notes . . . during this initial coding researchers undertake what is called open coding where they identify and even extract themes, topics, or issues in a

systematic manner" (Berg, 1998, p.151).

The method of analysis focused on the manifest content as well as the analysis of the latent content. When analyzing the data I first focused on reoccurring words and/or phrases such as "interactive" or "assignments" and "what they should have done" or "what would have been beneficial."

The latent analysis involved more than the respondent's words, it encompassed their language. The intonation in their voice, the body language as they spoke, and even the hesitations when sharing reflections provided insight into the consequence or inconsequence of the aspect of the course that was being discussed. To aid in this process, I listened to the recorded interviews during my first coding of the data.

Throughout the first coding I concentrated on a line by line analysis. Throughout this procedure I concentrated on specific information that the respondent was providing in relation to my six guiding questions. Thus, I focused on reflections pertaining to curriculum, pedagogy, relationships, networking and assignments.

My second read through the transcripts took on a more holistic approach. I now concentrated on comments made by respondents that had more general or broad implications. These were often related to general perceptions. For example, comments about class dynamics or their feelings or levels of anxiety were coded.

During the coding the four basic guidelines suggested by Strauss and discussed by Berg (1998) were followed. They are (a) ask the data a specific and

consistent set of questions, (b) analyze the data minutely, (c) frequently interrupt the coding to write a theoretical note, and (d) never assume the analytic relevance of any traditional variable such as age sex, social class, and so forth until the data show it to be relevant (Berg, 1998, pp.236-238). Throughout my coding I continually reflected upon my initial six questions while analyzing the data. I also listened to the taped interview during my first coding to check the accuracy of the transcripts, to keep me on a slow and analytical pace and to provide the differing qualities in how the respondent expressed their words. This added insight into the meaning or importance of the reflections. A separate sheet was used to record random notes about ideas triggered during the coding. These notes aided in the development of common coding categories. There are no references to gender throughout this research as it was observed that participants reflections were so diverse that no connection could be made to any perception being predominantly typified as male or female.

These coded data were then grouped. This grouping was accomplished through the development of a category system. Because a semi-structured interview schedule was used; the main questions became the major markers. Each of these markers became a coding frame and within each of these, further coding frames were developed from both the session titles as well as emerging themes. Many of these final coding frames were developed through the subsequent coding of the data as common themes became more apparent.

From this stage a list was developed on each page that consisted of a code to find relevant information or quotations. The code was simply the first

letter of the participants' first name, the page number and line number of the transcript. For example, a quote from Joe's (a pseudonym) transcript on page 25, line 1132 would be recorded under the appropriate coding frame as J-25-1132. Once all of the initial codes had been recorded the coding frames were re-examined and a number of modifications were made. These modifications consisted mostly of combining coding frames that contained data that were similar. To group the coding frames into sections each page was laid out on my kitchen, hallway and living-room floor. Coding frames that were related to a similar topic were moved to a specific area. Throughout this process about 10 sections began to develop. For example, there was one section for areas related to student achievement. Each of the coding frames was then re-examined to evaluate if it could be more appropriately placed. A binder was then used to sort and organize each section. Each section then consisted of a number of pages, one page for each coding frame.

Trustworthiness

A number of actions were taken to decrease the threats to validity. Participants were provided with the interview schedule before the interview. Three of the participants had read the schedule and one had written some reflections prior to the interview. Interview appointments were scheduled for two hours and it was requested that they take place where we could converse uninterrupted. It was also requested that the participants have their course materials available to reflect upon at the interview.

Techniques used to maximize the trustworthiness of the data included

seeking clarification and elaboration of responses throughout the interview combined with the summarizing of points as they were made for confirmation. As well, transcripts were returned to participants for verification. Open coding based on the major research questions was used to interpret the data and the coded transcripts were member checked by a graduate student. This verified the themes that had been identified through the analysis of the data and the reporting of the results. An informal confirmation of the identified themes also took place through phone conversations with a number of participants after the interviews had been done. They related that they and others who had participated concurred that these were appropriate findings.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were always closely observed. Principals were always aware when conversations were being taped, and were assured that their names and the names of their schools would not be used. They were also assured that information gathered would be synthesized as much as possible so as not to identify specific schools, situations or people.

I have endeavored to make this as authentic and straightforward as possible without compromising the anonymity of the participants. Through the writing I was continually conscious to omit any specifics that could somehow identify one or more of the participants.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

Summary of the Data

The initial six questions were used to guide the research and when analyzing the data. These were:

1. Which aspects of the program's curriculum content were most beneficial?
2. Which teaching methodologies used during the training sessions were most effective?
3. How helpful was the mentorship partnership? What aspects were crucial for its success?
4. One aspect of the course that is not overtly stated as an objective is the networking that transpires. Did the introduction to experts in specific areas or to practicing principals serve as a benefit after the completion of the program?
5. There are also a number of assignments throughout the course. Are these assignments applicable to what is being taught during instructional time? Are they appropriate in practically preparing participants for administrative positions?
6. Which aspects of the program have served to be most beneficial in preparing the participant for administrative practice?

Description of the Findings

The description of the findings begins with the initial session at the beginning of the course and ends with common themes identified by the researcher. The examination begins with what is specific. There were specific

topics grouped together and covered throughout the course. This leads into a look at inadvertent outcomes not specifically addressed in a session, but nonetheless present throughout the course. Finally a number of emerging characteristics that became apparent through the analysis of the data are discussed.

The description of the findings begins with the initial Tuesday session where participants were informed as to the outline, criteria and expectations of the course. Flowing from this session, all of the Tuesday session topics are addressed. They were initially grouped under three topic headings for the course and will follow the same format. The three topics are (a) student achievement, (b) student conduct, and (c) staff performance and attitudes. Then each of the four Saturdays, which contained sessions related to a general subject will be addressed. These session topics were (a) parent and community attitudes, (b) the district perspective, (c) physical assets, and (d) finances.

After the examination of the topics covered in the Saturday sessions the aspects of the course that were dispersed throughout the four months will be described. Following these are the descriptions of course characteristics that were not listed as a direct part of the course but were discovered through the analysis of the data.

Course Outline and Criteria

The first session of the course started on the evening of January 11, 1996. It was an initial information session where the participants were informed that the course would be rigorous and intense. The participants recalled that

both the purpose and content of the course were clearly outlined. "The topics were all identified very clearly right at the beginning, and you got the list right there, dates, timelines, etc." One of the participants found it a "real eye opener" when one of the first things covered was the mission statement for Edmonton Public Schools.

> One of the first things they did was give us a test on the vision...I had never seen a vision before so I was basically pulling things out of a hat...some people were really upset, but it's making a point, it's saying that if you're not given the information, then you had better find out somehow, you had better find a way to do that.

All of the participants commented on how they entered the course with a mind-set of flexability as they understood that there would be growing pains. One person stated, "I didn't expect things to be perfect, I expected it to evolve." This evolution and area of uncertainty was mainly focused on what was expected of the participants. "Well, I think the intent was, here's how the program is going to be structured, then while the program was going on some evolution took place because this was novel for the presenters." The participants knew it was going to be rigorous, but they were unaware of the performance specifics that were expected.

> I knew what was going to be covered, but the expectations for the program, like how well are we going to do, what is that going to look like, what is that going to mean, am I going to get a four or am I going to be pleased with my nine, those things weren't clearly established.

Student Achievement

The first main section of topics to be covered fell under the heading of student achievement. This lasted six sessions and covered monitoring curriculum, monitoring instruction, monitoring assessment strategies, reporting

student progress, analyzing achievement results, and setting achievement targets. A number of respondents from the elementary schools felt this area to be "really, really, really important." Their comments focused mostly on the initial four sessions involving curriculum, instruction, assessment strategies and reporting of student progress. One participant labeled them as "key," another as "essential," stating that "I would have probably given a bit more time in each of those areas." There were a number of specific benefits from individual sessions that were outlined by a number of respondents. These benefits and reflections are explored as each session topic is briefly discussed.

Monitoring curriculum. A number of participants felt that the session on monitoring curriculum was very beneficial as it reminded them "of a lot of things that maybe I hadn't been doing." The session was also described as beneficial in that it provided many "little tips" and "good pointers as to what to look for when monitoring it." Those respondents from junior and senior high schools did not express the same support for this session. The session on monitoring curriculum was described as having "no perspective on the high school."

Monitoring instruction. Monitoring Instruction was also stated as having been "very, very practical...one of those areas that I go back to more and more." This session was described as providing "lots of information about what kinds of things to know and look for, what suggestions to give, how to set it up so that if things aren't in place you can help get them in place." Another respondent felt this session to be very useful and practical.

> You will find out very quickly either from kids and/or parents and/or teachers whether it's occurring or it isn't, and if you want to get into what

> the aspects are then you get into a bit more of the clinical approach in regards to sitting down with a person and saying these are the things that I need to look for and I think we got that from that session.

The respondents from the upper divisions shed a different light on the session.

> The position they took was not a facilitative approach, it was more of you will have your teachers do. . . in high school as a principal you realize very very quickly you are not the expert in the school in terms of curriculum, it's probably your department heads and that you really rely on their expertise to bring matters to you, and so it's best how you would facilitate that.

Monitoring assessment strategies. Monitoring assessment strategies was seen as very beneficial by all course participants. The session was described as "covering a lot of strategies we could use" and "I really did value the information that I was able to pick up, the skills I was able to pick up in terms of assessment as well." One participant explained why this session was beneficial.

> The benefit of it came because obviously you are dealing with it on a day to day basis and as a principal it's going to come up somewhere along the way where you have to address the issue with a specific teacher, the department, whatever it might be.

Reporting student progress. The session on reporting student progress was helpful for all in that it provided "a lot of the language that surrounds student progress reporting." The session seemed to place a greater emphasis on reporting in the lower divisions. Participants with an elementary perspective saw it as "beneficial to review the expectations in terms of reporting student progress and helpful to look at different ways that schools do that." Those who were processing the information being provided with a junior and senior high focus found that the report cards that were being selected along with the comments and issues that were being discussed had no relevance to what was being done

in high school.

Analyzing achievement results. The session on analyzing achievement results was commented on by a number of respondents as being quite beneficial, particularly because most of the participants were inexperienced in this area. "It was new information and it was very specific...it wasn't something that most of us had done before." The analysis of the results was described as being very specific and beneficial because it is common across the province. "I think administrators need to learn that...what were your results and being able to do a rather detailed analysis of what the results are telling you." One respondent described that session as "definitely preparing you to be able to come into a school and do that. " The specific and detailed nature of the process and the benefit of the session was highlighted in this statement:

> They walked through what the expectations were and the information that they gave was piled in my little box underneath my desk, and when it came down to issuing a results review package for my community I pulled out my notes.

The only criticism was that the session focused too much on "the numbers on the page." One respondent suggested that, "You have to be able to break down the test and look at how students perform and then give teachers good information on how their students are performing." This good information is described as information that goes right back into a teaching style and curriculum application. One respondent warned that the numbers can be "very misleading when you just look at it over one period of time, it need's to be more long range."

Setting achievement targets. None of the respondents said much about setting achievement targets. The only suggestion was that it needed to be a little

broader. The participants explained that when putting achievement targets together you need to look at the students, teachers and curriculum and then as a group set targets. They pointed out that instead of dealing so much with the district office perspective that the practical issues of dealing with the resistance of teachers and the students you are working with need to be addressed as well.

Student Conduct

The sessions on student conduct lasted four evenings. The topics covered were legal requirements, establishing a positive behavior plan, development of plans to involve students in a wide variety of activities and analyzing attitude results. These sessions were seen as beneficial by all but received the most feedback from participants who described their schools as being more "difficult" or "lacking control." One participant described this area as "one of the most important things that I use in my school right now."

Legal requirements. The first session addressed the legal requirements in relation to school and district policies. Participants seemed to deem this topic as important no matter what their background and experience. "The legal requirements are always good to revisit...it's good to be aware of them and to keep up with changes." The participants who had more experience dealing with legal issues in schools appreciated how the facilitators "drew us into the conversation and valued what we had to say so that was very very positive." The information provided was described as being very practical "hands-on" information. The participants appreciated that real situations that would be seen in schools were discussed. The presenter "told people where it was at and didn't

demystify it or color it with any fancy jargon...it was outlined that these are the kinds of things you need to do when you are dealing with student conduct." Participants also appreciated the emphasis on documentation and the information that was provided to "put it all on paper and access the resources that we needed." One participant stated that "this was one of the better sessions because these people had real life experiences."

Establishing a positive behavior plan. Establishing a positive behavior plan was the second session under student conduct and was described as being very beneficial by a number of participants. One participant outlined how behavior plans are always being dealt with by administrators. "That was a good one, you're always taking a look at behavior plans." A number of participants also found the information as very practical and were able to apply it at their schools.

> When I worked through this session I learned a lot of good information...one of the first things I did when I came into my assignment was establish a student conduct policy and you are talking about application, did I go back to the information? Yeah absolutely!

Another described the session's comprehensiveness as "learning what all the pieces we need to have in place in order to have things happen the way they are supposed to happen."

Development of plans to Involve students in a wide variety of areas. Development of plans to involve students in a wide variety of areas was the third session. It was described by all participants as being good practical information. A dominant point brought up by a couple of respondents was how the reinforcing question of "whose school is it?" was reinforced throughout. Another message that came through was that "if we don't trust our students to do what we want

them to do and give them the right tools they will never learn." One respondent stated that, "This session was a good balance of someone who was coming from the district perspective and someone who was coming from the school perspective and they were able to merge and have it click."

Analyzing attitude results. Analyzing attitude results was the last of the four student conduct sessions. This session was described by the participants as being very practical. "I know that going through those sessions and learning about what these things mean has helped me immensely." One participant explained that:

> What we did here was look at the various ways that you can look at those documents and then how you can draw results...how did we come in, what do we need to work on, does it match up with the budget document and the goals we've set. . . it was excellent.

Staff Performance and Attitudes

Staff performance and attitudes was the third section of sessions covered in the program. The eight sessions covered Tuesday evenings through April and May and were the final eight Tuesdays of the 20 week course. The topics covered were performance management, professional development for staff, mentoring of staff, staff conflict, managing staff dynamics, how to run a successful staff meeting, team building and creating a school vision. All of the participants found the sessions valuable and one in particular described this section as 90 percent of the job. "If you have staff who are positive, who have excellent teaching strategies and a positive rapport with students, you've got half your job made."

Performance management. The first session dealt with performance

management. This session was referred to by a number of participants as developing an understanding of the district perspective with respect to the Alberta Education guidelines.

> We looked at the whole document that came out, it was a huge binder, that looked at all the different models and talked about what the new regulation was and how it was going to affect our jobs once we got into the school...we had to look at what model we were going to use and then there were probably 12 really comprehensive models that we could pick from.

Each participant mentioned how they had used the information and applied what they had learned to their unique situations.

Professional development for Staff. Professional development was the second session and was considered by the majority of respondents to be either unnecessary or in need of a broader scope. One participant stated "I don't know whether we needed that session or not." Another described it as a topic that could be addressed, but not developed: "it doesn't have to be one model coming in and saying this is the way to do it."

Others described it as "an important topic that needs to be considered before entering a new staff." One suggestion that was made was to:

> Show the different models and then people need to decide and have that in their heads before they go, because the whole point behind this is to work through some of this stuff because I've never been in a position where I've had to think about it for a whole staff.

Another stated that, "They gave us a little bit of information on staff development in terms of how to work with maybe people in crisis...but they didn't look at the broad range of how things will establish the culture of a school through professional development." These comments about needing a broader

scope were also reinforced by comments from those principals in the upper divisions. It was suggested that professional development needs to take a different scope depending on the school. "When you are dealing with elementary, junior high and high school individuals, it has a different meaning to each one."

Mentoring of staff. Mentoring of staff was the third session. The respondents' reflections focused very much on how this session involved self-analysis.

> Where it was of significant benefit was the opportunity to reflect upon your own beliefs about how people learn...the individual that did it asked some really engaging type questions that forced reflection...they give you some information and then step back and let you work with that information...so you kind of build a scaffold and work your way up.

Another participant stated that: "most of the focus of that was on knowing yourself and your personal goals, and working with other principals." One person described "knowing what kind of leader you will be" as important because "all of these things need to be clearly in your head when you walk through the doors, when you are given the position because if you haven't worked through that, it's coming."

The one respondent who did not mention the reflective aspect of the session commented that "if I could do without any on them (sessions) it would be that one." This could be related to another participant's description that:

> That person scared the hell out of us in terms of what mentoring staff was, and we all sat there saying they haven't been in school for a long time, but I have since found out they are the wisest person in our district...they really had a real perception on how to work with people but we weren't ready for that as new principals.

Managing staff conflict. Managing staff conflict was the fourth session and the first in the month of May. This session was seen as providing good foundational information to build upon: "they gave some very good practical strategies but nothing's a teacher until you have to do it." Another participant concluded that:

> It gave us a number of different practical scenarios and we were all privy to hearing what the resolutions were and there were some that I though there's no way I would've done it that way, but at least it let me watch someone else...what their process might be and so then it let me know what wouldn't do for me.

Managing staff dynamics. Managing staff dynamics was the fifth session. The presenter from the field was described by one participant as being "outstanding...he did really really good things with the group and opened himself up." A number of participants described the topic as very important. "If your staff dynamics are not under control and you have a couple of difficult situations, it could ruin you're entire population." One described the session as "looking at some of the conflicts that might arise and then looking at what are the dynamics of a staff and how do you work with them."

How to run a successful staff meeting. My question about this session was followed by an immediate smile and sometimes a chuckle by each of the respondents. One respondent described the session as "practical, hands-on, good use...very meaningful." Another described how the assignment was used to help create the agenda for the very first staff meeting and that: "I talked to lots of people and they said first staff meeting they looked up that assignment."

One respondent also commented on the variety of models and

suggestions presented. "The part I enjoyed here was a few different looks on how you could do this."

Team building. Team building was the next session and only one of the participants mentioned how they had applied information from that session. This participant had adapted the assignment from the session and used it with the school staff on the first non-operational day of each of the past two years. Another participant described the session as "a lot of theory but no practical."

Creating a school vision. Creating a school vision concluded this section and was the last Tuesday night session for the course. Everyone made comments about this session. Overall it was seen as very beneficial. "These people gave what I felt was a nice clean overview of the importance of a having a school vision, and then how to pull it together." One respondent found it very beneficial personally. "We had to sit down and create a vision for a school and it was something I had never done, it was kind of all crystallization of what my own personal beliefs were." Another paralleled this sentiment by stating that:

> It was hard...it forced me to go through the process and I've got a really clear picture of where I'm going...but I had never taken myself through that process and it was a really weird thing to do not knowing the school.

One participant appreciated the process that was taught and how that could be applied in practice.

> The thing I learned is how to use words, become a word smith on writing these things...it's very difficult articulating your vision in a shortened format, yet being clear enough so that people can connect with it very quickly.

Parent and Community Attitudes

This was the first of four Saturday sessions that happened once per

month. Although the participants did not appreciate having a class on Saturdays they did appreciate most of the content covered during the sessions. The first Saturday consisted of sessions focusing on a communication plan with parents, school council, conflict resolution and marketing your school. When asked about each of the sessions the responses became more vague and a number of times a participant replied with "I can't recall" or "I don't remember" as it became more difficult to recall information from a whole day of sessions. One person stated "it was weird in some ways, like I felt that they kind of mixed things up there too much."

Communication plan with parents. The first session on developing a communication plan with parents was referred to by a number of participants as being beneficial. Most commented on how they used the course information in the development of their newsletters. "The sessions were good, they talked about the process parent and community and how do we involve them."

School councils. The second session developed the topic of school councils. "That was the beginning of the direction in terms of building a school council provincially and many of our schools were doing the right thing...so they went through the legislation surrounding the school council and that was good, important information...really how to work with a parent and draw people into participating on school council."

Conflict resolution. The third session was on conflict resolution. Two respondents couldn't remember what was covered. Of the other four, two suggested that the session, although good, could be combined with the previous

session on conflict. "I would probably stick that one with managing staff conflict." The participants liked the session and felt it to be important but "it just seemed to get muddled in here." One participant commented on the importance of this topic.

> I think this is an area where you deal with it but you can learn how to better deal with it and I think it's something I paid a little more close attention to because everyday is a new experience...so the more things you have in your back pocket on that one the better.

One respondent felt the topic could have been better developed. "Presenters were weak, they were definitely not the people for it...sometimes I felt for the presenters because in many cases it was just an academic exercise."

Marketing your school. The last session of the day focused on marketing your school.

> It was very brief, we talked about the SWAP analysis , what do you see that's positive, what do you see that needs to be looked at, what are your strengths, what are your weaknesses, what's your adjoining population, how old is your community...it didn't go into great detail about what we actually do.

One participant commented on how this was a necessary topic in the development of administrators. "Marketing your school was really great...it's something you have to do, it's something you need to think about and it's something that we as teachers don't typically have the information."

When reflecting on the practicality of the session a number of respondents also began to share how it was difficult dealing with the aspect of competitiveness that has entered the school system. "It raised my anxiety a lot...you are competing with people that you need a collegial relationship with." These concerns seemed to overshadow the course material. "Where are we

supposed to get these students from...I think they've set us up for a lot of stress that we don't need at marketing business." A number of comments supported this conclusion.

> I think alternatives for people is healthy but setting us up where there's pressure on us to market the school and attract new kids...whether it's rip off the Catholics or what, the idea is there are only so many kids.

> Marketing the school as far as the community and people having confidence in the school and feeling good about what's going on that's one thing, but the competitive idea I think needs to be de-emphasized.

Another suggestion made was that the marketing needed to include instruction in how to market during the rough times.

> You market your school in the good times but most importantly when you need to market is in the bad times. Like when you are dealing with a crisis in your school or when you really need to change an attitude that's pervasive in your community what do you do with that? For me I don't really want to hear about how to buy the brochures and get the banners, that's only a question of money and anybody can do that. How do you market your school in tough times and that's what they need to address with the principals.

<u>The District Perspective</u>

The district perspective was the focus of the seven topics addressed during the second Saturday. "This was an amazing day but once again overload and kind of jumbling." Not only did the participants learn about the district perspective during these sessions, but they also made reference to learning more about the district perspective throughout these interviews. This was seen as a great benefit as a number of participants expressed a desire to learn more about the district as one of the motivating factors in applying for the course. "I wanted to know more about the district's philosophy and mission statement...I wanted to know what leadership meant from a principal's perspective."

Participants especially appreciated how the district reinforced the collegial role between central office and administrators. "One of the things I appreciated from the beginning was the modeling that went on in the sense that I think our district has worked hard to show principals and district office working together."

Many comments also revealed a message that had been sent to the administrators.

> Well one of the things they always told you, and this was emphasized a lot, is that you don't have all the answers...and that it's really important that you are willing and able to access help when you need it.

A number of comments focused on their colleagues' perceptions.

> I've heard some of my colleagues, that are 10-20 years in the profession, say 'I'm afraid to ask them questions' or 'I'm afraid to call because you know that little black book'...are you crazy, if I don't know something I could find out within 48 hours, but I can also find out within 3 minutes.

One person gave some reasoning why.

> I think for many years there's been a perception, and I've certainly known enough administrative types, that if you called downtown for help there was something wrong with you and it went down in a book some place, well this guy is a loser, and they certainly disabused us of that notion.

The respondents learned that there are resource people to assist with questions. "If there is one thing that I did learn out of the course, there's somebody to answer every single question that you might have as a principal, and you just need to be not scared to do it." This learning about what was out there for support was also continually reinforced with the notion that the principals need to access this support. "So there was that just letting us know and reassure and instilling in us all the knowledge that there are people downtown there to support us and all we have to do is pick up the phone and

call."

The participants also appreciated how the message came through that they are not expected to be flawless in their practice of administration.

> One of the things I found to be very reassuring is that very many of them (presenters) shared really dumb mistakes they made, and that took some of the anxiety off of it, it was just knowing okay, I don't have to be perfect.

The main criticism to come out of this section was that the topics seemed to lack coherence. One respondent felt that the sessions from this section could have been divided up and more appropriately placed.

> Not thrown into this whole mix because you can see that you've got the district perspective then really it goes from media to how you fund kids, and in the middle you might as well just figure out how to handle your physical plant, it was all over the place and it was really too much to get anything really meaningful out of it.

Media training. Media training was the first of the seven sessions on the Saturday in March. Participants felt this session to be very beneficial and practical.

> That one was good because everybody lives in the fear of all of a sudden a microphone is in front of your face, can you comment? I found that one quite helpful because your either an administrator that has a natural comfort level for that but I would say that the majority of them still have difficulty with it.

This topic was interestingly commented on as necessary by both people who have had situations arise where the training was needed and also by those who have not.

> Well it may never happen, and I hope it never does happen but if it does I want to know what to do and so again I think by giving us some background information in that area, they are being extremely proactive.

Others appreciated the training because they had felt it to be one part of

the course that was very applicable to their experiences.

> What to do when the SUN walks in your door...they walked us through a step by step process of this is the information, this is what you do, this is my phone number, this is how you handle them, these are the kinds of things you do to deal with the press...really, really practical and great because we all sort of face that.

Another participant echoed similarly: "That was incredibly helpful, knowing that there was a procedure in place and finding out what do you do."

One respondent stressed the importance of this topic by commenting on what could happen when situations are not handled properly.

> If we deal with it inappropriately it can backfire overnight and you can have a riot on your hands...the training we have received in the media has saved us as a district in many ways, it was very valuable.

Legal issues. Legal issues followed media training and was viewed by most of the respondents as a good, but brief, overview. "It was just a glimpse, here's a taste of what it is and a lot of these were just a taste, but I know now who I need to contact." Another respondent characterized this session similarly.

> It wasn't an in depth kind of thing that they did with us but it was enough for us to know that those people are there and that when you run into these situations that's who you talk to.

Most comments focused on knowing whom to call. "The most I came away with on that one is who are the people that you need to touch base with."

One respondent felt that this topic would have been more effectively addressed when the group dealt with legal issues earlier in the course during the section covering student conduct.

> This could've easily gone back with the other session...had it as legal issues and broken it down into student conduct and the second thing it looking at the legalities of things, what do we need to know.

Transportation. Transportation did not seem to be a pressing issue for the administrators. Most of their comments were directed at decreasing the amount of time spent on transportation. "Look at this one here on transportation, did I really need that, not really." Another respondent agreed.

> If there is one I would like to see eliminated, it would be that one...mind you I don't have 100 kids being transported back and forth, maybe if I were in that situation that would have been very useful for me.

A number of respondents made suggestions. "That's one of the one's where I would have probably said you know give us a hand-out." Another participant echoed the hand-out suggestion. "Give us the hand-outs of what I have to pay for this kid and this kid and he's eligible, but I can read them on my own...if I need to find out specific information I'll phone."

One participant focused on the personal contact in stating "Basically all we really needed at that in-service was a name and a face and when you get to your school and you have transportation issues call me."

Consulting services project. About the only significant comment made about the consulting services project was that it could have come at a different time. "It could have come when we were talking about professional development, it would have fit in better there because it is tied directly into that."

Maintenance project. The session involving the maintenance project was commented on similarly by a number of respondents.

> Now a lot of people sitting there at the time probably said what the hell is he telling me this for because I don't have any practical applications for it so it probably went way over their heads.

This observation by one respondent seemed to be affirmed by others.

> It was overwhelming, I didn't have my own school, a lot of it didn't make sense, the specs were really unclear, a lot of numbers and a lot of figures to deal with, so although it was important for me it wasn't something that was pressing.

Another stated "The maintenance project, I was totally bamboozled and this was an area where even now I phone someone and say help."

A suggestion was made by one of the participants to move this session into the physical assets part of the course. They felt that this topic was more directly related to the discussions about the plant.

Current policies. This was described as "not very exciting, but things you need to know."

Special needs students. The session on special needs students prompted mixed reactions. One respondent commented that "most of my learning has been on the job for that one." Another concluded:

> This is crucial I think we probably could have spent a month just on this because I think for me I came out and I didn't realize in my first year how much I was probably missing on getting kids coded a certain way for funding purposes and it was sort of near the end of my first year that I realized 'Holy smokes! These guys are needy and I should be doing something about getting some money to program,' so I needed more information about that.

While another described that:

> They change the funding, they change the codes, all the levels have shifted and the eligibility requirements are way different and all that sort of thing so for a couple of these areas it might have been better just to say this is what the thing looks like.

Physical Assets

Physical assets was the focus of the third Saturday in the course. It was viewed as both beneficial and confusing. It was seen as very beneficial by those who felt they had a very low level of knowledge about physical assets.

> That probably is one of the most helpful sessions that I had because they took most of us who wouldn't know a microchip from a taco chip and started at ground zero and equated us with the responsibility that we have for the plant and led us through.

The confusion came for those participants who felt they had no concrete application for what was being taught. "That was overwhelming, that whole section because I didn't have a plant, I didn't have a custodian, there was a lot we needed to know." One participant gave an explanation as to why it was confusing and reasoned that only the basics are necessary. "These are things you need to know, it would only make sense to you when you get into your own school when you get it on your plant...give the basics and wait till next year." This opinion was echoed by another respondent. "I believe I would have learned far more if I would have done it in my first year as a principal."

One of the largest instructional compliments belongs to the presenters of this session. A number of respondents commented on how they were impressed.

> The maintenance one is really interesting because...I have to say of all the people who presented as far as the way they were organized, the way they presented it to us, the way they took us from a knowledge level to where we needed to be, I think the guys who did the very best job of anybody were the maintenance guys. Which really amused me because they are not educators.

Another stated, "It was an area where all of us felt way out of our league, but they did a very good job if it." One person even provided feedback for the presenters. "I told them how well they had put that session together for us because it was an area of great anxiety and great mystification for everyone and they took a lot of the mystery out of it for us."

Knowing your plant. The positive comments about this session came from

participants who pointed out that their personal level of knowledge about the topic was low. "I think this particular session was one of the most valuable that we had simply because I don't think there were any of us who had any knowledge or background to deal with the whole issue."

The main difficulty that participants had with the information was in their application efforts. "Trying to relate it or maybe the school you were in but really not having good access to knowing the plant and that type of thing, so it wasn't relevant enough for it to make sense for me." A number of respondents felt it would have been more beneficial to receive the details after they had been placed in a school.

> If I had been in my second or third week of being a principal and they called me down there and said now you're there, what sorts of things have you done to know your plant...it's only now in my second year that I'm getting a handle on the physical plant, at all.

Understanding maintenance issues. Participants included their reflections of this section with those of the previous maintenance sections. They felt it was an important topic and appreciated gaining an understanding of the basic information. They also requested that further information be provided once they had been assigned to a school

Team planning with head custodian. One participant found that some of the things that had been learned could be immediately applied at the start of the year.

> I found that really useful, and I know that one of the first things that I did, and this was based upon what I had learned in the course, walk around your building, meet the custodian, do the walk around with him.

Monitoring your plant. The comments on this section echoed those of the

previous three. About the only comment that applied specifically to this section was that it would have been beneficial to have a checklist or some type of inventory to guide a new principal through what needs to be monitored. A number of comments were made referring to the head custodian's responsibility in this area, although most respondents still felt that that plant is ultimately the principal's responsibility. Because of this they stated that a comprehensive list of what needed to be monitored would have been helpful and informative. One respondent did state that: "I believe that the district is in the process making up a type of checklist for schools."

Finances

This was on the last Saturday of the course and was viewed as beneficial, but difficult to comprehend. The comments somewhat parallel those in the physical assets section because participants felt the information was important but difficult to process because they really had no direct application for it.

This was the only section where respondents' comments applied to the entire day and not to a specific session. The specific sessions were: (a) school allocations, (b) monitoring finances, (c) successful financial planning and (d) long term financial planning.

All of the respondents felt that the presenters "did an excellent job of presenting" although further comments revealed that not only was this a difficult topic to cover, it was also viewed as somewhat premature as respondents felt it difficult to process and understand the information. "There is nothing like it until you are dealing with your very own and have to live and breathe it." One of the

specific positive comments made about this session was that the presenters provided a good cross section. "They had a high school in there, they had a junior high and they had a elementary in there and they gave their different perspectives and what they focus on in a budget."

Although each of the respondents felt this to be a very important topic, the majority felt that the breath and depth of the information provided was difficult to comprehend. One respondent commented on their observation of the group's response: "To give you all of the finances in one fell swoop, there were some people in there who had never looked at an FMRS, Boy! They must have been really overwhelmed." The observation of being "overwhelmed" was echoed in a number of respondents' reflections.

These reflections focused not only on the amount of information, but also on the difficulty of applying it when there had not been much previous experience in budget and finances. "There is no way they had me ready for that. Well I'm not a finance type person, I'm not an accounting type person." Another stated: "Because it doesn't make sense, really it doesn't make sense that I'd be working with this 4.4 million budget or 2.2 million budget it made no sense."

The most common comment was that the information would have made more sense if they had been directly applying it to a specific placement, which was impossible because none of the participants had been appointed as school principals. "At that time, that particular Saturday, and all this information it was pretty vague it wasn't meaningful." "It didn't make sense to us. To me I should say, for myself, I didn't have a budget."

When finances did become a pressing issue was during the following year when all of the participants were appointed to their first principalships. Every respondent commented on the importance of meeting as a group during their first year. "That's something I was going to say is that that component of the program where they continued it into our first year as principal, that was critical." One respondent described what took place.

> All the first year principals, so even the ones who hadn't taken the course, as things came up, as it came time for even doing your results review in preparing your budget document, then you would have a session with the new principals. Where now it was real, now you had your own piece of paper in your hand. So maybe that could be scratched or reduced into one evening session.

This focus on having the follow up session during their first year in the principalship as well as reducing the amount of time spent on finances during the course was commented on by a number of respondents.

> This (finances) was a good one...I think this should be run twice, it should probably be run at principal school to give you an idea of things and it should be run in your first year as a principal again...in our first year as a principal there was a session, when we got the budget they brought us all in and we worked on our budgets together, we all sat down and did it.

When asked if the Saturday session had provided enough of a base the participant responded: "Everything could have been less than a Saturday, it probably would have been good in two sessions." Another participant suggested that: "the Saturday session was too long" and that an evening session that introduced them briefly to the topics would have been beneficial. "This would provide a base." It was explained that from this base participants would move into a position, and then deal with financial topics in more depth once they had a school. This respondent also concluded with a qualifying statement: "but I'm not

a money person, so there you go." Another one of the respondents commented on the Saturday and also suggested placing the session earlier on because of its importance and intensity. "I don't think a Saturday was a good time to do it...and I think everybody by May fourth was bagged, I think if anything it probably should have been earlier on."

One participant made a comment about the presenters: "Not all, but some of the presentations on that were brutal, their own familiarity with it was weak."

Critical Self-Appraisal

The six topic areas covered under the heading of critical self-appraisal were addressed differently than the other areas covered in the course. These topics were not covered in specific sessions, as were all of the others, they were addressed throughout the course at different times as a part of other sessions.

Participants felt these sessions to be of benefit. Most of them commented on how they were already critical and reflective, but that it was beneficial to learn some specifics about certain areas. "That is an area of weakness...it's not that it isn't occurring, I just don't articulate it or write it down."

Strategies for initial self-appraisal. Although there was more of a tendency by participants to comment on the area of critical self-appraisal in general, one participant also focused on the area of strategies for initial self-appraisal because of the perceived emphasis that the district places on it.

> It's such a strong district focus...it's not just for yourself as well, but as an instructional leader who probably is skilled at self reflection, how do you work with staff and encourage them to become critical self appraisers as well. We can be operational in terms of our own use, but then the next step is how do you work with staff in terms of helping them be self appraisers as well. Coming up with a plan that really focuses in upon

critical self-appraisers is a key component of that.

Developing personal goals. This was commented on as a necessary topic but one participant felt that there need to be further explanation with the assignment. "If you saw what one looked like, my own comfort level would have been far higher, that was missing in that."

One suggestion that was made was to include "something about the need to have excellence in some other part of your life whether it's your family or a hobby or something, and we never really did."

Managing change and transition. The respondents that commented on this area felt that it was very necessary for a number of reasons, most common was because of the amount of change in the district and the need to effectively manage this change within schools.

> That's the one thing in our district, is that there is a lot of movement, there's a lot of change, there's constantly things going on that you have to adapt to, there's not only managing change for yourself, but I think it's managing change and helping to facilitate change for your staff because you can walk into a staff room and they will say, 'Well I've been here 35 years, I've seen X number of principals come and go, so you might be here three or four, but I'm staying and you're going.' So they don't handle that change aspect very well.

The respondent continued by commenting on how managing change is a difficult thing to teach: "but they can certainly give you some pointers." Another respondent echoed the need for administrators to be able to deal with change.

> I think our district has so much change and transition that this is crucial. They talked at length about what it means to change, about how we respond to change, and what our feelings are, which made me think about some of the changes that we're faced with and how we need to ensure that staff are comfortable with some of the change, some of it they won't be comfortable with but I think the more we can talk about it and elaborate on the effectiveness of change would make it a much easier transition.

Another respondent provided some reasoning behind the need to understand managing change.

> There are so many changes, and looking at what the superintendent's expectations about what we do in our schools, looking at creative change, I don't think there are any closed doors...when you open it up that quickly though there are some people that are reluctant to change because they haven't had to change for five or ten or fifteen or twenty or thirty years so the question is how do we manage that transition. There was some pretty valid information points in that.

Behaving with integrity. All of the respondents felt that behaving with integrity was a very important topic from a personal as well as a district perspective. "I felt they gave you a lot of information in terms of looking at yourself and reflecting on these and talking about behavior with integrity." Another reinforced the importance of the topic by simply stating: "I don't think we can speak enough about that."

One respondent felt it necessary to discuss the topic so that everyone was working from the same understanding, which would decrease misunderstandings due to assumptions: "I think you have to travel it, table it, just so that there's a base to work from, otherwise a lot of assumptions are lost in the ATA, the professional code of ethics, etc. etc. etc."

The district perspective and focus on integrity was commented on by a number of respondents.

> I think it's the principle of our district, we have key principles of our district and that's a key aspect of it. As an administrator or a person who is becoming an administrator, I think it's really important to come to that and look at what that means and how that reflects on your position.

Another respondent said, "When we look at the organization framework

that's what is right at the beginning." This perception was echoed by another respondent who stated: "A crucial thing in our district was to look at how do we behave with integrity and what are the kinds of things we need to do."

Being a district principal. One of the respondents commented on how it is important to review continually the rules and responsibilities and statement of the principal. Another felt it necessary to have a basic understanding of how the district views the principalship and what is expected of principals. "You need to understand what your district is about, for sure."

Knowing one's leadership style. The comments on this section focused on the necessity as an administrator to understand one's leadership style so that their dominant characteristics can be modified to meet the needs of staff members.

> The part I find more interesting is what are the other quadrants or what other styles, so you know that when you are working with somebody else on a committee you sort of know where they are coming from and what seems to be important to them versus what's important to you and having that knowledge to work with.

Course Expectations

One first things that participants were asked to reflect upon was the existence of any pre-course expectations that they may have had. The responses generally included a comment about understanding more about the district along with a comment about the workload.

> I was looking for a very comprehensive program. I was under no illusions that it was going to be easy...I knew the time commitment was a big one and I knew it would cover the scope of the principalship...in its entirety.

There seemed to be no illusions about the rigor to come.

> I believe they didn't pull any punches from the beginning, and sort of said you know it's going to be tough, it needs to be, if you think this is tough, get in the school. It you can make this, and juggle all these different things, guess what, that's what a principal is. We understand that you all have lives, and that you all have jobs and everything else but the bottom line is, you have to be able to juggle all of those different things, so expect it to be tough, and they said it right up front, they didn't pull any punches that way.

One participant stated: "I was quite fearful when I first looked at the outline...thinking do we have to go through all of that?"

A number of respondents also included comments about how they wanted to understand more about the position of the principal and leadership.

> I felt it was an opportunity to gain a different perspective and look at the different components of leadership...I wanted to know a little bit more about the district's philosophy, mission statement...I wanted to know what leadership meant from a principals' perspective in a school. Understanding more about the district was a common motivator.

> I really wanted to understand the culture of Edmonton Public Schools...I wanted to understand the fabric behind the principalship, what kinds of decisions go into putting together a good team in a school, what are the expectations in terms of what Alberta Education really wanted us to be looking at, how to work effectively with a parent community. I wanted to see from very seasoned leaders in our district the things that they valued and the expertise that they gained and how did I measure up to these people.

Many of the respondents also commented on how their expectations were met or surpassed.

> We were told it was going to be rigorous and it was...I was expecting that the kinds of things that we would be doing, the assignments that we would be doing, that it would really cover the principal curriculum and in that way it really fulfilled my expectations for what it would or should be.

One respondent commented that although it was understood that the course would be intense, there was also a calming aspect when looking at the long term preparation that would result, because there was some anxiety

attached to entering the principalship.

> When I saw the outline that they had laid out, when I was looking at the prospect of being a principal and knowing that there were all of these areas that I needed a knowledge base in, when I saw that that was going to be provided for us that they were addressing those things with us, that took an awful lot of the anxiety out of it and if they had them listed then this is a way to learn this, you're not just expected to know it.

One participant was looking for affirmation in the progress of his/her professional development and advancement.

> Each of the divisions have their own characteristics, their own needs, and if you don't have that understanding you can really be caught in the lack of that experience, so I wanted to get some reaffirmation that I'm heading in the right direction.

Intensity

The phrase, "Having been through the pressure that we went through," was used by one of the respondents before commenting about how there was a "bond" that took place because they had all experienced the challenges together. This statement paints an immediate picture that the course was demanding, intense and in one respondent's words "grueling." The combination of taking one evening a week, one Saturday a month and multiple hours to complete homework assignments was taxing for all of the participants who continued to work at full time jobs within the district.

> When I had the Saturday and was losing half my weekend and I was feeling pressure because I was not with my family, plus I had extra work on top of that, it became almost unmanageable for me, until I could get myself back into a scope where 'OK! Thank God there's not a Saturday this week!'...seriously that was almost the breaking point for me...it was crucial information, and they were excellent sessions but I would have rather had a month more of classes.

A couple of the participants mentioned that they were not the only ones

that had noticed the increased workload. "There was some criticism of the course about the rigor from principals of the schools where the people were participating. They thought it was just too hard on their individuals." This intensity was mostly a result of the assignments that were given throughout the course. "A lot of late hours went into cranking it out because you were running late hours at the school plus doing your assignments...that became weary after awhile." One respondent summed up a common reaction when asked about the intensity of the course, "Well, first off, is back off with the expectations, the intensity."

Assignments

There were many different reactions when asked about the assignments in the course. Everyone appreciated what the assignments had them do.

> I agree with the assignments, I think they should be there, I think they should be there for every class...I felt the assignments were a way to push me into really going into some depths with some of these things...it gave me the opportunity to work through the thing so that by the time that I did get a school and go into a school, really a lot of that stuff I had gone through.

Aside from the volume of work that was expected of the participants, the benefit was that everyone appreciated what the assignments did to prepare them for a principal position. "You know I just remembered the assignments and how miserable we were, 'How dare they make us think about this!' but you know what? It was really good." The most common criticisms were related to the expectations, workload, and marking. Only one respondent mentioned anything about not decreasing the workload. "I know that we complained about it non-stop as I reflect, and although we complained I probably wouldn't have changed very much." One participant felt that the expectations decreased appropriately and

also gave a brief explanation in how limiting the amount of work put into an assignment was beneficial.

> That first four or five assignments were out of control but then they realized what people were doing and I think we were way out of control, I think the people giving the assignments were also out of control as well and it toned it self down, so I don't think they were completely unreasonable, and maybe it was the attitude I adopted where I sort of said, 'Well, I am only doing two hours and if it's not good enough, well it's not good enough'."

A number of respondents commented on how they thought that the assignments were quite flexible and could be tailored to the individual.

> We all took this one curriculum and of course the assignments that we did were kind of open ended assignments and you could do a lot with them. So an individual who has some pretty powerful skills in that area in terms of the assignment, the assignment is not going to limit them in terms of what they are able to demonstrate or explore in that regard. I think the sky's the limit in a lot of ways.

Most participants appreciated the assignments that were more flexible. "Assignments that were really open ended and activities that were open-ended I felt were best for the group."

One participant provided a specific example of using an assignment.

> That assignment I used at looking at our behavior plan, how are we going to make this a successful approach, what are some of the strengths of our school, what are some of the areas that we need to look at, what do we believe about how kids learn and how we should discipline kids, I pulled it out and went through it and thought, Yeah, We can use some of this.

Many comments were directed towards the pressure that participants felt in completing the assignments.

> The assignments took way too much time. First of all they told you you could respond to these in an hour to and hour and a half, there wasn't one assignment that took me an hour to and hour and a half. I really resented the amount of time that the assignments took because it took away from the work I was doing at school and I work hard in school.

This comment was echoed by others:

> The assignments you were given were really really complicated, in-depth type of assignments and they insisted that you not spend more than two hours on them and I don't think anybody did that. I think people were spending mega hours on it. I know if you left on Thursday night you could've worked on it every night up until next class, and there was some complaint about how they were only supposed to be so many pages long and some people handed in 10 page assignments, what I did was I realized that, Yeah, I could be consumed by this so I wouldn't start working until after school Wednesday night.

One respondent also felt that the criteria were unclear.

> The criteria for some of them wasn't really clear and we kind of worked through that, I mean the alternate goal is not to actually get your nine but to learn from the session, but the emphasis wasn't that when you didn't get your 9, or your 8, or your 7 or your 6 or 5, I think the emphasis need to be much clearer in looking at it as being a learning mode and a learning capability.

Another respondent agreed and made similar adaptations:

> After the first few assignments I was crazed, I was spending 20 hours, I was trying to make them perfect...I got to a point where I went, it's more important for me to get something out of this, I don't care what kind of mark they are going to give me, I'm going to do my best on it and I'm not going to do more than two hours.

One participant gave some explanation for why the assignments were so intense.

> Our response was then give us a two hour assignment, and I think because as leadership staff it almost worked against us because we are perfectionists we wanted to be the best...but going through the course I'll tell you if we didn't get our 8's and 9's we were devastated.

Another stated: "I guess maybe it was our own fault in being perfectionist and having to be a certain quality...I think they should be evaluated pass or fail I can live with that." One provided further explanation. "You're a busy type person and to come down and go through literally a school situation with the intent of

having an assignment...there are limits to how much a person can do."

Generally comments were make like: "They kind of overdid that first year and particularly the assignments that they were giving us." and "The assignments were really excessive. Way, way to much." One respondent felt that there was too much emphasis placed on participants' assignment performance.

> You can't base everything on an assignment because sometimes it's just because of how a person writes, they can't get what they mean down on paper, but you put them into a situation and tell them to deal with it, they are probably one of the best at it.

Pedagogy

Instruction. One of the course characteristics that participants appreciated was that the sessions included someone from the field. "I thought having administrators lead the sessions was really good because it showed us a lot of leadership styles." Participants appreciated the variety of presenters.

> What was interesting was seeing this range of principals and it was very obvious that there were very different styles just in hearing these people talk, in the way they presented to us there was a tremendous range and I guess for me personally that was reassuring to know that there isn't a cookie cutter stamp kind of principal, but that they are all very different personality types.

When referring to the sessions involving someone from central office as well as a school, one respondent said:

> They were doing some really interesting things, and why wouldn't you want to be in a session listening to one of your colleagues talk about the successes that they've had and then compare them to our own, you may come away with one idea but never the less I think the biggest benefit or one of the greatest things in terms of professional development is collegial sharing.

A number of participants really felt that a number of the presenters were exceptional.

> In terms of the presenters the one thing I learned is that there are people who really love their craft and when you give those people an opportunity to share, that's when the magic happens, that's when I left saying, 'Yeah I want to be a principal' because I felt that person's passion and their creativity and the momentum and they really inspired me. I would say that 90% of the sessions we attended were exceptional.

Another respondent agreed. "Some of the presenters were bang on, they were great, even if they talked on the driest topic, they still knew how to make it interesting."

Most of the critical comments about the presentations focused on having more opportunity for interaction.

> Well you could look at the group and just see that people who are interactive probably had the best result of all, and by nature, teachers love to talk. We like each other, we're really oriented towards the culture that we want to support and engage somebody in dialogue and so if you allow us to do what we know best, we're probably learning more.

Participants enjoyed working together.

> I found it most effective when they came in and did some short presentation and gave some specific examples of things and then let us do some actual group work with it, I'm the type of person that learns best by talking, and be interacting with someone and bouncing ideas back and forth and so I found that those sessions were the best for me.

Participants appreciated it when they were drawn into what was being addressed.

> It's not that old style of I know it and you need to know it...a lot of times what they are doing is sharing some of the things they had done, but they are creating an environment for all of these people who are successful in their own right to share information.

Participants viewed this interaction as very beneficial. "It creates a tremendous learning environment just that opportunity to share with each other is phenomenal." This acknowledgment of how people want to interact, especially

when many of them have valuable insights to share, was explained by one participant.

> I think you need to make sure that the presenters can stay connected with the people that they are talking to, they also need to understand that you're not talking to a run of the mill first year university student in a CI class, some of the people in the crowd could be your presenter or co-presenter.

It was pointed out that some presenters didn't practice what participants feel is "preached."

> One of the criticisms I have is that when we do professional development, that often times the professional development doesn't match what we know and believe about teaching and learning, that there's to be active involvement.

Another respondent expressed a similar observation.

> What I giggled at was one of the things as an instructional leader or as a school leader, is that you try to provide programming to students that captures their interest, gets them involved, the experiential learning, the hands-on, all the things to try to motivate and get kids involved and now you are receiving methodologies that sometimes you shake your head at.

Another respondent expressed: "It's one thing talking about it, but it's another thing delivering it and in all honesty some of the sessions were dead."

Overall the participants enjoyed the sessions, although most made comments about desiring more interaction.

Feedback. One respondent's reply summed up what a few participants said when asked about the feedback received throughout the course:

> The purpose was clear, the content we knew, the expectations needed to be looked at. Each one of our sessions was evaluated and there was a lot of animosity initially regarding, 'How dare he judge our work!' and some did really well and some didn't do very well and we felt that if we were on a leadership level of taking these courses that the criteria needed to be a little more specific and for the first part we knew it was a new project, we knew there'd be bugs that needed to be ironed out, but when you got your

> paper back and you only got 43%, there was some devastation for some participants and the competition started to increase.

There were also a number of comments made about the assignment feedback that was received from a number of specific sessions. When asked about the sessions on staff conflict and staff dynamics one respondent replied: "When I think about the assignment that we were given and the feedback that people got, I think people, in my belief was that they were a little displeased with it." The participant continued with a further explanation:

> Because this is the one that I think everybody has an experience in and everybody has a belief of 'Yeah, this is the way I would do it, this is the correct way,' so you did this assignment and you got the information back and I believe that we were told in fairly blunt language that well you're wrong, in a way it was fairly negative.

The comments on the assignments were also quite varied. "Some just wrote a mark not a comment, some put little check marks as they went and then little comments in the margin, other ones did these really detailed rubrics." In discussing the topic of assignments one respondent shared that: "when we were given our responses back, we failed because we did not share the position that the coordinator shared or the facilitator shared." There were quite a number of comments made about the grading of assignments.

> It definitely raised the stress level when assignments were being marked, we went through an evolutionary stage where 'Whoa! Now give me some feedback on the marking because there's a lot of teacher student analogies here'...there was quite a bit of concern because again, no different than the kids in school. Was the assignment really understood? Some people were writing essays, other people had bullet formats. What are the criteria for these things please? Give me some feedback where it fell apart.

There was a final component of feedback mentioned. "In the end we were

all supposed to be called in for one-on-ones that didn't necessarily occur, it was more or less left optional."

One respondent felt that this feedback was necessary and explained why.

> There were some animosities expressed by a fair number of individuals. Some people I think knew their weaknesses after going through the course, and didn't request an interview and I'm not sure whether that's good because it's one thing assuming that the answer is there, but it's another thing actually hearing the answer. So I think that's a component that needs to be improved on.

Interaction

The interaction that took place among the course participants as well as with the presenters was seen by all of the participants as beneficial. Each of the participants commented on their relationships with others in the class and how they enjoyed interacting with their colleagues. A few participants also shared about how they made choices throughout the program relating to whom they were going to interact with and how they were going to conduct themselves during the sessions. A few choose not to ask questions during different occasions for a number of reasons. They were either concerned about how they would be viewed by the session's instructor or they were concerned with how they would be viewed by their classmates. A number of respondents seemed sensitive to this because they felt that others in the course were asking far too many questions in an obvious effort to be noticed. The respondents that comment about this class dynamic had no desire to be seen as "keeners" and were not concerned with demonstrating their knowledge or abilities to impress the facilitators.

I felt like I had been a principal for years when I hear some of the things

> they were telling people they needed to know. Some of the people in the group were pleasers who were wide-eyed and gulped in everything and then said it was wonderful. There were also the one's who couldn't think and would get up and get a cookie every time there was a question asked so they didn't have to respond.

Networking with central office. The first aspect of the networking that took place was the opportunity for participants to meet and "put a face to" people whom they could contact who were experts in certain areas.

> In having these people from central office it made it clear for us, 'OK if I have issues in this particular area that's the person I need to go to,' so it highlighted or flagged all the way along who you go to for what.

"It provided me with a list of people out there who are superb in their area and I have in fact used several of those people since when I've run into a question or I'm not sure how to proceed." When commenting on the session on professional development for staff one participant concluded:

> I don't know that it was the course material that was valuable as much as these people that were valuable, I have gone to them several times in particular issues with staff or what would be the best way of approaching this.

Networking among participants. The second aspect of networking was the relationships that developed amongst the course participants.

> The networking was really good, certainly I would say there was probably more networking that went on within the group, we became pretty tight and groups within the group, I felt groups within the groups became very tight, you sort of found who you worked well with and who you reacted to, you know the similar kind of styles or people that you knew from before and you sort of became a little group and would help each other out.

Many of the course participants have continued to remain in contact with colleagues from the course. "The networking I have to say has remained to this day, that we all feel special to one another...there's a bond that we lived through

that very first course."

There were many similar statements that paralleled the closeness sentiment. "Certainly there were a lot of people that I'm still really close to." Another respondent affirmed this dynamic. "There's no doubt we developed a great core." On person described how this networking continued to be a benefit as they met a principals during the 1996/1997 school year.

> There was a bond that sprang up among us and it's still there, it was really interesting when we met as new principals last year, those of us who were in the course...there was a closeness there that the other people didn't have and I think really missed out in, I was really glad I was one of the people who had been through the course.

A number of participants mentioned how they still meet with people whom they went through the course with.

> I still maintain contact with some of the people I took the course with and of course that's good because we still do talk about educational issues and things that are happening in our schools, and it's nice to talk to them about the kinds of things that are foremost in your mind as administrators.

Another explained a further benefit to developing relationships with others in the course.

> You start to understand the strengths of certain people and if there were issues that you may be dealing with you know where you could actually go and get some ideas and that was one of the things I really noticed in that course.

One respondent felt that course participants were able to empathize with each others situations. "The nice thing about the course is that you did have a network, you knew who you could call and who was probably in the same boat as you are and maybe asking the same silly questions."

A number of principals discussed some of the reasons behind the

importance of networking. One person felt it to be important because of the support it provided. "I think you need to do that, 'Hi, how's it going?' This is our first year, what does it look like on your front?" Another participant provided a number of reasons for networking and explained how it should become a part of the program.

> Networking is completing your assignments, networking in problem solving, sure you have a lot to do on your own but I think those networks need to be developed before you're out in your schools because it's a pretty lonely job. Once your door shuts whether it's open or not, you're behind the scenes in your office and you make between 50 and 150 decisions in a day. If you are lost and don't know where to turn it becomes a very difficult situation. I think that if you take a look at some of the professional organizations outside of education and networking is a priority, that's why I was so disappointed to hear that it was not built in.

The perceived importance of networking can be seen throughout these previous comments. It was an important and dominant outcome of the course. One participant stresses the perceived emphasis on networking in declaring "I was so disappointed to hear it was not built in."

Class dynamics. One of the difficult dynamics that participants had to deal with was the competitiveness that was present throughout the sessions. "You're probably aware of the competitive nature of university that carried on throughout the course, the additional scenario whether you liked it or not was that everything was an evaluation." Course participants struggled between the message of district collegiality and support, and the reality of evaluation competitiveness.

> The one thing about the class that I found personally difficult was the competitive nature of it. I'm very happy to compete with people, doesn't bother me but there were times when I thought that we were out of the collegial mode and into the I want to be heard to make an impression mode and that just irritates me to no end.

Because the course participants had an understanding that from this group people would be assigned principalships, there was an assumption that was prevalent. The participants assumed that their performance affected their placement potential, although they didn't know how. Was performance based on how much they could take on, knowledge of course material, assignment marks, or interaction with others throughout the sessions. The participants did not have a clear picture as to how or on what basis principals would be chosen. Thus, a dichotomy existed that placed the anxiety of competition based on a variety of assumptions against the desire and message of collegial support and interaction.

Mentorship

The concept of mentorship was addressed three ways in the course. The first was through a session on being a mentor, the second through shadowing a first year principal for a day and the third was through being assigned a mentor during their first year as a principal.

The participants did not feel that the sessions on being a mentor of staff were very beneficial because "again it is such an individual thing." It was suggested that "if they do want to develop the topic, provide ideas on how to approach a staff member and how to help it happen."

As part of the program, participants were to spend one day with a first year principal. The objective of this exercise was to have participants develop an understanding of what they would experience as a first year principal. This was beneficial, but they felt that the shadowing could have been made more beneficial if it also included some time with an experienced principal. One stated

that even someone who is an assistant principal does not do or see some of the things that an experienced principal does.

A third type of mentorship took place after the program ended. Each participant was assigned to a mentor principal by central office after graduating from the course and being assigned to a principalship. Although each participant viewed the role and importance of a mentor similarly the mentorship aspect of the program prompted a variety of responses from the course participants. "One of the things they did when you got your principalship was they provided you with a mentor. I thought that was a really great idea, not that I went to my mentor a lot." The suggestion was made that for principal mentorship to become more effective, principals should have access to some type of program where they might influence the choosing of their mentor. One example could be in providing an opportunity for a principal to submit a list of their top three mentor choices.

It is also possible that the participant's idea of a mentor differs from that of the district. "My idea is someone I can whine to, laugh with, and know that they're not always evaluating me." Mentorship is described as something very special: "it's something you choose, not something chosen for you."

The success spectrum on this topic is very broad and would take the shape of an inverse bell curve. The relationship either developed to quite a deep level, or it did not develop much at all, with the majority of respondents articulating the latter situation.

There were two mentorship relationships that developed. "I have a wonderful mentor...we get together on a regular basis." In both situations neither

participant had established any previous relationship with the mentor. "The person took time for me, would call, would listen if I called and said I had a concern they actually spent some time with me to get things right."

The majority of participants provided some insights into their views on mentorship.

> I think by saying here's somebody you can call if you want to it does give you that opportunity...I think it makes more sense (having the opportunity to suggest a mentor) in a lot of ways rather than having them choose the person, you choose them.

One person explained that:

> There has to be buy in on both people's parts as to whether or not it's going to work, but nevertheless somebody has been identified for you as being the expert to go to in time of need if you need to. But, nobody says you have to.

It seemed as thought a number of the principals went to different people depending on the situation.

> There's another individual in a school close by so when it came down to working with the school budget system on the computer and putting all the data in I called him up and he came over and he worked with me on an evening doing that...I didn't automatically go to the mentor, this person had some knowledge and I asked him to help me and he helped me. He was my mentor in that situation.

One participant suggested that the participants be approached and be asked to provide suggestions.

> It would good to ask people is there someone in the group that you would like to work with, that you would feel comfortable asking questions of and then we will ask them if they would like to be a mentor.

Another made the suggestion that it would be beneficial to be provided with the opportunity to affirm the district's choice. "Assigning you to an individual doesn't necessarily establish a mentoring relationship does it?"

One participant explained how they handled the concept and role of mentorship during their first year. "I have actually set up a couple of other mentors as well, since I became a principal...I've got different mentors for different purposes."

Some participants continued to develop previously established relationships.

> The mentorship program works effectively but the match has to be well established, they had assigned a mentor and that didn't work as effectively as the networking that I had previously developed...why would I break bonds there and go somewhere else?

One respondent provided some reasons as to why some of the relationships did not develop.

> There were other people who were assigned mentors who the mentor couldn't remember who they were supposed to be working with, couldn't show up when they were supposed to and they didn't feel there was a bond or a relationship at all.

One respondent felt that their match was not appropriate. "I really felt I knew the business better than the individual I was mentored with, it would have been more valuable to align me with someone that had a greater experience base."

Of the mentorship relationships that developed, they seemed to be based on more than the connection of being in a common position. Both of the participants who shared success stories had connected with their mentors because of common characteristics within their personal lives and because an immediate level of trust had been established. It is these reflections that move the focus of successful mentorships from a pragmatic base to one that

emphasizes the relational.

Overall Benefits

Participants were asked at the end of the interview to comment on the aspects of the course that they felt were most crucial in contributing to their success as a first year principal. As was anticipated there were a variety of components that participants focused on.

Most of the comments directed towards the course content focused on the aspects of the course that involved students and staff.

> Student conduct, discipline, the legal aspects of it were crucial, student achievement and everything that fell under that...as well as staff evaluation, this was one area that I needed more information on and I think I got it.

Another participant provided what they felt to be most beneficial and explained why.

> When you take a look at the most beneficial: monitoring curriculum, monitoring instruction, monitoring assessment strategies, and reporting student progress are crucial. I think that's the whole crux of education, if I know there's good instruction taking place in my classrooms, if I know that curriculum is being taught, if I know the there isn't wasted time in transition and that the kids are assessed in a fair and balanced manner, and parents are shared with that information and we report student progress, if I know that's happening there's a big load off of my shoulder.

Another participant responded similarly.

> The student achievement component was really, really, really, really important, that whole area about monitoring curriculum, student progress, analyzing results was key. Student conduct, staff performance and attitudes, finances and physical assets were big ones for me.

Consistently throughout the interviews participants commented on how the information relating to student achievement and staff performance and attitudes was very beneficial. "Finances and knowing your plant was

important...but the most important thing for me was my work with staff: mentoring of staff, staff performance and staff dynamics."

Another common benefit of the course mentioned by all of the respondents was the development of a network. One of the district perspectives that participants really appreciated was that principals were not expected to fly solo.

> If there was one thing that I learned from the course, there's somebody to answer every single question that you might have as a principal, and you just need to not be scared to do it.

A number of participants appreciated the breadth of information provided and how participants were pushed to expand their professional abilities. "I think the scope of the things that were covered, the comprehensive nature of the course." Another commented on how this comprehensiveness was somewhat envied by other principals within the district.

> I know when I was whining and sniffling and carrying on about how hard this course was and all of the expectations they had of us and this tremendous load of information and the principals out in the field were saying if you have any idea of how lucky you are, they just dropped me in there and let me find it all out for myself and they're handing it and explaining it to you. I know even when I go to my area meetings these area support groups that we have which is also a really great idea, there are things that those of us who took the course know that some of the more experienced principals weren't aware of, just simply because it was one of the things that we covered.

A number of participants commented on how they appreciated the meetings that they had during their first year as a principal. One participant really appreciated what had happened after the conclusion of the course and stated, "Having the first year principals meet afterwards once you were in a school" as one of the most beneficial aspects.

> You would have a session with the new principals, where now it was real, now you had your own pieces of paper in your hand...those sessions were as meaningful or more meaningful than the course was.

Potential Modifications

There were a number of potential changes suggested by the course participants. Some were frequently mentioned and became increasingly evident, others were mentioned only once or twice but were very insightful.

There were a couple of grievances that were repeatedly mentioned. The first was the assignment expectations. "First off back off with the expectations." The second was having to go to sessions on Saturdays. "We were really unhappy to be there that Saturday, let alone have another assignment to do that week." Another participant stated that:

> The Saturdays were ridiculous, there was so much information that was given...it was a full day and there was an assignment, so you would be dealing with two assignments and losing half your weekend, it was crazy...I would have rather had a month more of classes!

Another participant agreed. "First of all, the Saturdays were terrible, they were long, they were drawn out, it was like make work, I don't do make work very well." One participant gave some explanation as to why the Saturday's were difficult to endure.

> Most of us were already high achievers, high energy types, and the types of jobs that we were doing, well we were carrying more than we could handle as it was and so the expectations that were laid on us were pretty heavy and then these Saturday sessions where we had a couple of different areas presented one after the other, particularly unrelated ones.

Another one of the more common comments was in reference to the sessions on finances. "Physical assets and finances could have been put into maybe an evening session, and then once you got into a school then let's go

through the detail." One participant felt that the more difficult sessions should have been placed earlier in the course. "Everybody by May fourth was bagged, I think if anything it probably should have been earlier on." Another participant stated:

> I'm a believer in you're only going to learn business when your involved with the business, and sometimes knowing nothing about it and having to work through it is your best teacher...you can have all the people talking to you about it and reading about it, and it's another thing going through it.

This opinion was paralleled by a number of similar statements. "I have to say though that until you actually start working with it you don't really understand it. You get a cursory type understanding of how the FIST works."

One of the areas that respondents felt they wanted more information on was conflict resolution. One respondent wanted more information concerning how to deal with the community. "I would add more conflict resolution and how to handle yourself in a crisis, I don't think we put enough emphasis on that in our relationship with the community during a crisis." Another respondent suggested that more information regarding working with teachers needed to be covered. "They talked about teacher conflict and what to do if they are mentally ill, but there's a lot of teachers walking the edge and they have to know what to do with them to." One respondent felt it would have been better to deal with the spectrum of conflict resolution in one session instead of splitting it up between staff performance and attitudes and parent and community attitudes. "Conflict resolution, I would probably even stick that one with mentoring, staff conflict, stick it in there."

Each respondent that commented on transportation felt that a minimal

amount of time could be spent on it. "Transportation didn't really fit anywhere." One person said, "Just give me the handout and let me read it."

Another common theme was the perception that there could be some adjustments made so that people from all divisions could equally benefit.

> I think maybe, just about for all of these topics you need to skew it a little bit differently for the variety of levels that you're gunning for, otherwise when you get into the nitty gritties, that information is good, but it's not really all that helpful.

A number of participants echoed this observation.

> There are a couple of things I think that are missing. School organization has different meaning for an elementary principal versus a junior high principal versus a high school principal...sometimes you need to fine tune the presentations according to the audience you're serving, and I think the other aspect is some form of clarity of what kind of school do they potentially see you going to, if you have the potential.

> Dealing with elementary school parents versus a high school parent, totally different ball of wax...what they needed was to do was have the homework assignments reflect the division level and many people attempted to do that.

A number of comments related to the aspect of time management and learning what it's like to be a principal. "Techniques of time management are not really looked at, so I think that's a short coming."

> I would have liked to have more in-school experiences where I could have gone in and observed principals in action...it would have been great, never having been a principal to see the scope of things that happens in a day.

> The balance of being a principal is having the time for your students and having time for the paper, the paper is overwhelming, how do you do that and then strike a balance in your life and that's the one thing that they didn't talk about in this course is the balance of your own life...something about that you need to have excellence in some other part of your life whether it's your family or a hobby or something.

One participant felt that sessions that involved fairly deep cognitive efforts

should have been addressed near the beginning of the course.

> I think it would have been a lot better to do this (school vision) as one of the first sessions for when I was a new principal. I would take this out of the specific course and put it into the first year sessions...it would have been a lot more practical, this was also near the end of the course, I just sort of looked at them and went, 'phew!, I'm completely brain dead, I don't care'.

A number of participants commented on the need to include some variety in the instructional styles. "Keeping the variety up there has to be high on the priority...there is only so much sit time that you can put in on a Saturday afternoon."

> When discussing one of the financial sessions one participant stated that: I think I would like to have more knowledge of some of the systems that we are working with that our secretaries are doing a large part of the work, sort of the financial nitty gritty stuff because that created some question marks for me last year.

Sessions that address topics related to student and teacher performance were very much appreciated and applied. It was obvious through many of the principals' comments that their greatest concerns in their schools were related to student and staff performance. "We also didn't talk about empowering students, how do you make great leaders out of your student body and how do you coach teachers to make great leaders out of their students."

CHAPTER 5

Summary and Discussion

Summary of the Research Problem

This study was designed to investigate the most beneficial outcomes as perceived by first year principals after completing the Edmonton Public Schools Principalship Training and Development Program. This knowledge can be used in the continued improvement of principalship training programs. Six specific questions have guided the inquiry:

1. Which aspects of the program's curriculum content were most beneficial?
2. Which teaching methodologies used during the training sessions were most effective?
3. How helpful was the mentorship partnership? What aspects were crucial for its success?
4. One aspect of the course that is not overtly stated as an objective is the networking that transpires. Did the introduction to experts in specific areas or to practicing principals serve as a benefit after the completion of the program?
5. There are also a number of assignments throughout the course. Are these assignments applicable to what is being taught during instructional time? Are they appropriate in practically preparing participants for administrative positions?
6. Which aspects of the program have served to be most beneficial in preparing the participant for administrative practice?

Summary of the Method

This qualitative study was designed to collect the perceptions of principals who began their first year as a principal in the fall of 1997. The semi-structured interview method was used to collect data. A pilot study was done to aid the researcher in developing an effective interview schedule and interview method.

Principals were contacted to inform them of the study, request their participation and provide consent. They were informed that they could at any time exercise their right to completely withdraw any or all of the data that they provided. This was explained to each participant initially by phone, then in the consent form and lastly at the start of the interview. Interviews were then conducted over a period of 2 weeks. Each of the six interviews lasted approximately 2 hours. The principals were given transcripts of their interviews and were provided with the opportunity to request changes, additions, omissions or modifications.

Open coding based on the major research questions was used to interpret the data and the coded transcripts were member checked by a graduate student. This verified the themes that had been identified through the analysis of the data and the reporting of the results.

Interpretation of the Findings

Four common messages became increasingly evident as I analyzed the data: (a) relationships, (b) intensity, (c) content and (d) district Perspective.

Relationships

There were two main networks of relationships that developed throughout

the course. The first network that developed among the course participants and the second network developed between the presenters and the participants.

The networking that developed among the course participants was mentioned by all of the participants a number of times and was stated by the majority of them as one of the most beneficial aspects of the course. These relationships first started to develop during the course. While participating in sessions and while completing assignments a number of participants stated how relationships formed between individuals or within groups of individuals. These people would often work together in class and would also help each other with their out-of-class assignments. Many of these relationships continued after the course and pairs or groups of principals phoned or met together throughout the year. A number of participants said that they still keep in touch with some of their colleagues from the course.

This networking among participants worked a second way as well. A number of participants shared how they had met someone through participation in the course who were skilled in a certain area or who had some type of special connection. Participants shared that they would freely contact one of their course classmates to talk about how the year is going or to ask "Are you having the same problem that I am?" This was a benefit because participants knew that there were "others out there" that were experiencing many of the same difficulties that they were.

The second network that developed was between the course participants and the presenters. Many of the participants commented on how they now felt

more comfortable calling a specific person in central office because they had met the person and "can put a face to the name." They also shared how they had appreciated meeting principals who were experts in certain areas and could later be approached with questions or concerns. Five of the participants provided specific examples of how they had called a presenter/principal whom they had met through the course for information and/or advice.

Principals enjoy relationships. Each of the respondents commented about the aspect of the job that results in their feeling isolated, lonely or alone. Each person also shared about how they enjoyed the interaction that took place throughout the course. The interaction that took place during the course was appreciated by all. Many of the participants also shared how this networking resulted in the formation of relationships that have continued. Daresh and Playko (1994) discovered that experienced administrators rated "establishing a positive and cooperative rapport with other administrators in the district" as the second most critical skill for beginning principals. After having spent one year as a principal the importance of the relationships was affirmed by the course participants.

Intensity and Assignments

All of the participants commented on how they understood, even before the course began, that it was going to be intense. "I was under no illusions it was going to be easy." They were also told right from the first session that it was going to be a lot of work. "I believe they didn't pull any punches from the beginning."

The intensity of the course was fueled by a number of factors. First of all the participants continued in their full time positions that they already had within the district. Most of the participants commented on how course participants, including themselves, were busy people. They were employees in the district who were already carrying heavy loads and taking on responsibility because they were the types of personalities who are high achievers. Thus, the time that it took to attend sessions combined with the time that it took to do assignments caused some overload.

The Saturday sessions were not commented on favorably by any of the participants. Not only were they long, but participants felt that two assignments in one week was overload; especially when the time to do what they usually do on a Saturday was lost. Losing a Saturday of time and having another assignment to complete was a combination that the participants had trouble accepting. A couple of the participants stated that the Saturday sessions should be eliminated.

One participant shared how even principals or supervisors could observe the toll that the course was taking on participants' regular employment responsibilities. These sentiments were most evident when assignments that were given at the start of the course were mentioned. It seemed as the course progressed the program supervisors and presenters made some adjustments to the assignment expectations.

Not only were the participants busy people, not only were they taking Tuesday nights and one Saturday to attend sessions, not only were they

supposed to be keeping self-reflective journals and doing professional reading . . . they were also supposed to complete assignments that had been initially described as needing no more than two hours attention. All of the course participants felt that the assignment expectations were unrealistic and unclear. The main criticisms were that the assignments were long, that the expectations and criteria were often unclear, and that the feedback was minimal and inconsistent. This group of high achievers struggled with these issues. Thus, the intensity of the time commitment combined with the anxiety of the assignment issues combined to raise the intensity level to a level described as "grueling."

Course Content

Each of the participants commented on how they entered the program with some high expectations, while at the same time knowing that there were high expectations expected of them. "I was looking for a comprehensive program." A comprehensive program was provided and the participants appreciated the breadth of topics covered. Because each of the topic areas was predetermined and organized into a specific sequence before the course began, this provided a base outline that was used in the interview to bring each area of the course curriculum to the respondents' attention. Chapter 4 examined in detail the reflections directed towards each of these areas. There were some common themes that developed and will be addressed in the categories that they were divided into for the course. These are (a) introduction, (b) student achievement, (c) student conduct, (d) staff performance and attitudes, (e) parent and community attitudes, (f) the district perspective, (g) physical assets, (h) finances

and (i) critical self-appraisal.

Introduction. The first session of the course covered the outline and criteria. The participants appreciated how the course seemed well organized and comprehensive, although they felt that the expectations were not clear. A number of participants made comments about how they were already wondering about how they were going to be graded and what criteria would be used to establish grades.

Student achievement. All of the respondents mentioned at least two, if not all, of the eight sessions covering this topic as extremely beneficial. A number of respondents stated this area to be of the most beneficial in the course because it was practical and important. A number of respondents felt this area to be of ultimate importance, the "crux" of education, for the principal.

Student conduct. All of the participants appreciated these four sessions, although none made any reference to its necessity. Most summed up their comments by stating that it was "good stuff to be aware of" or "good hands on information" or "practical." Participants enjoyed these sessions and commented on how they continue to use much of the information learned in their schools.

Staff performance and attitudes. Participants felt these eight sessions to be of vital importance. This section was a close second behind student achievement for receiving the most references to it being the most beneficial part of the course. Participants appreciated the practicality of the sessions as well as the different models that were presented throughout.

Parent and community attitudes. Participants appreciated sections of this

first Saturday's sessions. A number of respondents commented on how they used the communication ideas in their newsletters. Participants appreciated the information provided on school councils. The session on conflict resolution was only commented on by one participant who viewed it as "an area you can deal with but you can always learn how to do it better." The session on marketing your school received general "good" comments along with two suggestions. The first is the need to deal with the aspect of competitiveness that has entered the school system and the dichotomy that exists in the principalship between competitiveness and collegiality. The second suggestion brought to light the concern of how to deal with marketing your school during rough times. It was suggested that anyone can market in the good times and that marketing ability becomes an issue during the rough times.

The district perspective. The sessions on this Saturday received mixed reactions. What was prominent was the fact that participants appreciated understanding more about the district. Understanding what the district expects of principals was a common theme throughout the data and is valued by all of the principals. The difficulty that participants had with this section was the placement of topics. A number of principals felt that the session of legal issues could have been covered with the legal issue's session under student conduct. Transportation seemed to be minutely valued, by all of the participants. Participants felt that understanding the district projects, current policies and special needs eligibility was important.

Physical assets. All of the participants felt these sessions to be important,

although many struggled with applying the knowledge because not only were they working from a low knowledge level, they had no school situation to apply the information to.

Finances. Finances was viewed as very beneficial, but were commented on by the majority as very difficult to understand. Similar to the comments made about the physical assets sessions, participants had difficulty applying the information without the concrete real life application that all would inherit the following year.

Critical self appraisal. Although the six topics covered under this heading were dispersed throughout the course, the participants easily recalled the topics and confirmed their importance. The two most commented on topic areas were managing change and transition and behaving with integrity. All of the respondents felt each of these areas were dominant characteristics of the district.

Emergent Themes

As I analyzed the data four common themes began to emerge. The first is revealed through the competitiveness that each of the participants commented on. The second is based on the priority of integrity that participants expressed as a personal and district priority. The third theme is based on the concept of reflection and the perceived absence of it throughout the course. The fourth, and last emergent theme, is based on the notion of what I term connectedness. This idea is based on the notion that course participants seemed to express a common connection with the principal presenters.

Throughout the transcripts one of the common, but yet subtle themes is that of the district perspective; or the messages that the district attempted to convey to the participants. It became obvious to the principals from the beginning that the district had a certain vision and expected certain things from its leadership staff. "One of the first things put up during the opening session was the vision for Edmonton Public Schools."

What was interesting is that even though there was a Saturday focused on developing the district perspective, many other instances related to the district perspective came up in other areas throughout the course. The most dominant of these was the message that central office and practicing principals are to work together. All of the respondents commented on how they received the message that they are not expected to know everything and they are not expected to fly solo. A number of participants mentioned that the message came through loud and clear: that if you are not sure about something, phone someone. Participants also mentioned how the course really squashed the idea that if you asked for help you were admitting some level of incompetence. The message came through that principals are not expected to be experts in everything and that everyone has strengths and weaknesses.

Unfortunately, course participants had to balance this message of collegiality and district support with the dynamic of participating in a course that was evaluated and served as part of the selection process for future principals. This dichotomy created an anxiety and stress level within the group that was mostly reflected in the participants comments about assignments and

relationships.

Although the course participants had been selected from a fairly large pool of applicants, they were not guaranteed a principalship upon completion of the program. Thus, at the same time that they were learning what they needed to know to be a principal, they were also demonstrating their personal competence and suitability for the position. This anxiety level was raised by the fact that participants were unaware of the criteria by which they would be selected for a principalship. Was it a measurement of endurance, knowledge or personality? This ambiguity added a level of stress to the assignments as well as inserting an underlying tone of apprehensive trust within the group dynamics. Course participants shared that people seemed to do one of two things. They would group together and work with those they trusted, or they would stay fairly independent, choosing select people at appropriate times to interact with or ask questions of.

> You're sitting in there with 18-20 people, many of whom I didn't really know and even though they are saying we are all in it together, they also say you are going to get a mark. So right away you rise with the competition, I can gear up for competition. There was a little bit of that in the back of my mind, who's going to come out on top here.

This environment of ambiguity also affected the attitudes that developed. Some participants took the attitude of limiting their workload concluding "if it's not good enough, well it's not good enough." Others shared that they knew of participants who were consulting district employees about their assignments. The dynamic of competition combined with the participants natural tendencies to excel would be in conflict with the district message and their personal beliefs that

effective learning environments are to be as collegial, cooperative and transparent as possible.

The second theme that developed was that of principals behaving with integrity. Every respondent replied with conviction that they know that integrity is an overriding value within the district and that principals are expected to behave with integrity. Each participant demonstrated a solid conviction and understanding about what the district expected of them and how they were to go about their practice. This commitment to integrity seemed to be rooted in each of the participants' personal philosophy about administration.

The third theme that was transmitted focused on the reality of the principals' job. The course instructors were not shy in stating that the principalship is a demanding job; that time management and prioritization are vital and that being a principal forces people to do a balancing act. Participants commented on how this message came through, while they also inquired as to why some of these aspects of the principalship were not addressed. For example, participants were told that time management and prioritizing were characteristics of the principalship, although no sessions related directly to either of these topics. There seemed to be an absence of what is referred by a number of terms in the literature such as: moral dimensions (Taylor, 1995), philosophy of education (Highsmith, 1987), reflective practice and moral leadership (Sergiovanni, 1992).

The course focused on what administrators needed to know in a managerial sense. How they felt about being an administrator, what they know

about being a principal, how to deal with time management and the stresses of the principalship were not addressed in depth. This focus on content did not acknowledge much about what the participants now know about the holistic picture of being a principal. Where does the personal fit within the professional? There is a difference between knowing the content and understanding the life of being an administrator. After a year as a principal the participants understood more about this part of the position. One respondent shared:

> The balance of being a principal is having time for your students and for the paper . . .how do you do that and then strike a balance in your life, and that's the one thing they didn't talk about in the course . . .something about the need to have excellence in some other part of your life whether it's your family or a hobby or something.

One part of this holistic view of the principalship that was built into the course is the reflective aspect of being a principal. This was to be addressed through the writing of the reflective journals. Unfortunately, none of the participants expressed any benefit that resulted from writing the journals. The participants' reflective comments focused on how reflective opportunities were desired when they received assignments back or when subjects were being discussed that did not deal completely with paper work. For example, a number of participants stated that they would not have dealt with scenarios similarly to how the presenters did in the conflict resolution sessions. The reflections of participants revealed a desire for the opportunity to discuss alternate solutions. This is an area of the principalship that is valued by both the participants as well as Edmonton Public Schools.

> Our vision for the principalship is that principals will be known assured self-starters, committed to increasingly higher levels of performance, and

> competent in critical self-appraisal and critical self-evaluation as a basis for continuing improvement. (Edmonton Public Schools Superintendent's Performance Review Process of 70 Principals, 1997, p.3)

The opportunity to develop these reflective practices was desired by the course participants. The holistic view of the principalship and opportunities for reflection may not be part of the goals of the program, but if so, this should be stated to the students at the start. Possibly it may have been, although none of the respondents made reference to it, only to its absence.

The fourth theme that became apparent reveals how the participants appreciated having the principals as presenters along with the central office staff because of the application reality that they brought into the sessions. When participants shared about statements or stories that affected them during the course, most of the time a principal presenter had said it. Participants expressed a connectedness with these practicing administrators. Participants seemed to accept a principals' insights at face value, although district office employees seemed to have to demonstrate their pragmatism. A number of the reflections also focused on another district perspective that was relayed through the principal presenters: that the principals are human and that they will make mistakes. A number of respondents stated how much they appreciated the principals sharing mistakes they had made and how that helped lessen the anxiety of having to be a flawless principal.

Conclusions

There are a number of general conclusions that can be drawn from the data.

The network that developed among course participants as well as between presenters and participants is of great benefit to first year principals. For many of the participants the relationships developed throughout the course continued into their first year as a principal and served to be of great benefit. This benefit was not only based on the need for opinions and information, it is also based upon the need for a spirit of collegiality within the district. Principals appreciated being able to discuss their struggles and difficulties with someone whom they felt could relate, or was having similar experiences. Part of this network and support developed between the district assigned mentor and two of the principals. For all of the principals this network and support developed from previous relationships or throughout participation in the course.

Learning about the district perspectives and receiving the message that there is support in place for principals to utilize helped to drastically reduce anxieties about entering the principalship. The worry of "not knowing all of the answers" was mentioned by a majority of the respondents and was an initial concern. Through the sessions and the interaction with experienced administrators participants were reassured that the district does not expect flawlessness. The message that principals were to use the services available at central office was an extension of this message and was reinforced throughout the course.

Participants appreciated the breadth of topics covered and felt that this provided a broad base of knowledge before entering into a principalship. All of the participants expressed how they felt very prepared for the principalship at the

conclusion of the program. A number stated that they could not imagine entering the principalship without the preparations that the course provided.

The sessions that were most often identified as being very beneficial were those involving students and staff. The most common were: student conduct, student discipline, student achievement, staff evaluation, staff performance, staff dynamics, monitoring curriculum, monitoring instruction, monitoring assessment strategies and reporting student progress. Participants felt these sessions were the focus of their own philosophies and administrative practice. One of the respondents repeated a number of times "You know it's students first, they are the priority."

The sessions on finances and knowing your plant were also listed by a number of respondents as being "big ones." All of the course respondents appreciated the base of information that these sessions provided.

Beneath the characteristic of competitiveness was a level of anxiety that was referenced to by a number of participants. The course participants were uncomfortable with the atmosphere of competitiveness that was present during the course because they were unsure about how they were being evaluated. At the same time that they were being told that they needed to ask questions and not feel pressure to "know it all" they were also being evaluated for a future placement. The pressure of demonstrating competency then began to rise. Would participants be assigned to a principalship if they displayed an excellent level of knowledge about the day to day functions of running a school? This seemed to be the focus of the course and assignments. Alternately, would they

be placed because of their demonstrated philosophies, or would one participant simply need to outperform the others to solidify a placement? The anxiety of not knowing the criteria upon which they were being judged added another level to participants' natural levels of competitiveness.

The participants also needed to be able to trust their mentors. The relationships that developed were those where, more than anything, the administrator was looking for someone to listen.

Participants also appreciated the meetings that they had during their first year in the principalship. These meeting were declared as vital and extremely beneficial when dealing with topics such as finances and maintenance. Participants all commented on how these areas became much more comprehensible when they had their own site and budget. Having the program continue into the first year of administration, or having a second program specifically for first year administrators would provide the opportunity to go into more depth in the site specific areas. This could also be used to free up some time in the leadership program to address concerns about reflective practice and manageable amounts of content.

Overall the course was viewed as vital by the participants. Each respondent expressed their thankfulness for having the opportunity to participate in the course before their first appointment.

Recommendations

Although the program is generally well designed and viewed as necessary by its participants, a number of potential modifications can be identified.

When examining the course from a holistic perspective it becomes apparent that the program is too compact. The conceptualization of administrative training needs to be viewed as a continuous process. For a principal this process includes their pre-appointment, participation in the program and their first year in the position. The first year meetings with new principals were commented on by all of the participants as very beneficial. One respondent stated that the follow-up sessions were more crucial than the course.

A number of these potential changes could be addressed through the development of a number of sessions that new principals would attend during their first year in administration. This would be beneficial for a number of reasons. Topics that may experience changes from year to year can be updated for the beginning principals. This would reduce the need to cover them in detail during the course. As well, participants who were not assigned to a principalship after completing the course would benefit from these first year sessions if they are appointed in years to come. This would update information that had become obsolete. One participant had commented on how the sessions that were provided for first year administrators were as important as the course.

The district needs to communicate and explain to the participants the role of the course within the districts conceptual framework and understanding of the principalship. This may result in some time being taken during the course to acknowledge those areas of the principalship that are more personal. These sessions may include topics such as time management, organization skills, public speaking, or dealing with stress. The participants could also be informed

that the district has chosen not to address these topics.

There is also too much focus on managerial aspects of administration when participants have no knowledge of their future appointment. Because of such a large amount of information being presented in such a short amount of time each of the content areas of the course should be continually evaluated to establish an appropriate time allotment. A couple of the respondents stated that conflict could have been dealt with in one session. It was suggested that conflict involving students, staff and parents could have been dealt with in one session. A number of suggestions made by participants pointed to a few areas that could be developed through the use of a handout. Each topic included in the course may not need to be presented using a whole session. Some may need only brief introductions, while others may be introduced through a handout. One of the criteria that should be used when establishing the amount of time used to cover a subject is its tendency to change. A number of participants commented on how a few of the topics that had been developed in the course had changed the following year. An example of this was one of the financial management programs that had been learned during the course, which changed the following year.

The competitive aspect of the individual work should be removed. This has happened and is supported by the findings. This may be accomplished through a different marking scheme, and/or through a more explicit explanation as to how the participants are being evaluated for future placements. Participants would have appreciated a more thorough and clear outline of assignment

expectations and evaluation procedures in the introductory session. There were a number of comments made in reference to the grading expectations. This was a delicate subject, compounded by the fact that the course participants were high achievers. Participants desired more detail in the description and evaluation of assignments.

The course, or district, could designate an ombudsperson so that course participants could discuss issues and concerns with someone, without feeling that it may reduce their appointment opportunities. This may help reduce the perception of evaluation that permeates the course.

The course also needs to address the needs of those participants from secondary schools. The main criticism in the student achievement section was that a number of the sessions were not applicable to what was happening, or what needs to happen in high school. This was also true for a number of subsequent sessions. Those participants that viewed the course from a high school perspective felt that more flexibility and/or acknowledgment of the high school perspective would have increased the relevance of the information being addressed.

A major implication that has been established through this study is the benefit and need for preparation programs. The literature as well as the respondents' reflections support the theory that a training and development program is vital to a principals' success. Of the ten school districts in Alberta that provided information for this study, a combined average of 64% of present school principals will be eligible for retirement in the next ten years. All districts

should have some type of preparation program in place to help ensure the success of its future administrators.

Personal Reflections

One of my career goals is to be assigned to a leadership position with a school. I undertook this study not only because I felt that it would contribute to the preparation of school administrators in theory and practice, but also because it would contribute to my own personal preparation.

One of my expectations in doing this research is that I would learn more about the areas of administrative training that are perceived to be most important by recently appointed principals. This expectation was definitely fulfilled.

Through my literature review I discovered that principalship development is a topic that has become forefront in the education world. Districts, institutions, and professional organizations are attempting to discover the most effective methods through which teachers can be prepared to be administrators. The literature supported my findings: that training specific to a districts perspective is needed, that the skill acquisition as well as the personal part of being a principal needs to be developed, and that relationships developed through networking and mentors can be a huge asset in being a successful principal.

Personally, this has affirmed or revealed to me the need to develop leadership skills related to managerial tasks as well as personal abilities such as philosophies, vision and a balance between my personal and professional life. It has also affirmed the need to ask questions, to have mentors and to utilize a network of experts.

This study has also confirmed the need to continually evaluate what I am setting out to accomplish for its relevancy and necessity.

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Appendix A - ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT FOR THE PRINCIPAL

In accordance with law, board policy and regulations, and administrative regulations, the principal shall be responsible for:

The conduct and outcome of all programs both curricular and co-curricular.

Evaluating and reporting student learning and development.

The attitude of students toward self, others, school, and education.

The safety, welfare, and conduct of students while participating in school programs or on their way to or from school in transportation provided by the district.

The attitude of staff toward the students and parents, toward other staff, the schools, the district, and its programs.

The selection, assignment, training, performance and conduct, professional growth and advancement, safety and well-being, evaluation, retention, transfer, promotion, reprimand, demotion, and separation of staff.

The attitude of the parents and the community toward the school, the district, and its programs.

The condition of the physical assets: these shall include the neatness and cleanliness of the buildings and grounds and the safety, security, and state of maintenance and repair of the buildings, grounds, furnishings, and equipment, except to the extent that responsibility has been assigned to a department of the district.

The accommodation and district transport of students.

The planning, budgeting, and controlling of the expenditure of all funds.

Additional duties and obligations assigned by the superintendent of schools.

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Appendix B - CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

University of Alberta
Department of Education Policy Studies
Edmonton, Alberta

April 1, 1996

Mr. Miss or Mrs. (Principal),

My name is Brady Holland and I am a graduate student in Educational Administration at the University of Alberta. As partial fulfillment of my Master's degree requirements I am conducting research on the practical outcomes of the Edmonton Public Schools Principalship Training and Development Program. The title of the thesis is: A Study of the Edmonton Public Schools Principalship Training and Development Program. I want to learn more about which areas of the principalship training program are most beneficial to practicing administrators.

I would like your permission to include you in my study. You will be asked to participate in an interview with me. This interview will last approximately two hours and will focus on your experiences in the training program as well as its application to your position as an administrator. The interview will be recorded and the transcripts will be provided to you for proofing before any analysis begins.

I will not identify you or anyone else or even your school by name. No one will know how you answered any questions. If you decide you do not want to participate you can say no at any time. Thus, you may "opt out" of the research at any time and the data you provided would not be used. If you have any questions about this project now or later, please feel free to contact me at 456-7235 or my research supervisor, Dr. Margaret Haughty, at 492-7609.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please indicate this by signing in the space provided below and return this form in the envelope provided. If you choose not to participate please print your name on the bottom line and return the form in the envelope provided.

I, _____ give permission for Brady Holland to include me in the study as described above.

_____ _____
Signature Date

I, _____ choose not to participate in the study described above.

Appendix C - Interview Schedule

1. Could you please give a brief outline of your professional background and administrative experience?

2. What chain of events led to your being enrolled in the leadership development program?

3. a) What were some of the things you were looking for (expectations) at the start of the program?

b) Which aspects of the total program served to be most beneficial in preparing the participant for administrative practice?

c) What aspects of Student Achievement have been most beneficial?
- monitoring curriculum
- monitoring instruction
- monitoring assessment strategies
- reporting student progress
- analyzing achievement results
- setting achievement targets

d) What aspects of Student Conduct have been most beneficial?
- legal requirements (school and district policies)
- establishing a positive behavior plan
- development of plans to involve students in a wide variety of areas E.G.- personal goals, input into school decisions, community involvement, successful assemblies
- analyzing attitude results

e) What aspects of Staff performance and Attitudes have been most beneficial?
- performance management
- professional development for staff
- mentoring of staff
- managing staff conflict
- managing staff dynamics
- how to run a successful staff meeting
- team building
- creating a school vision

f) What aspects of Parent and Community Attitudes have been most beneficial?
- communication plan with parents
- school council
- conflict resolution
- marketing your school

g) What aspects of Finances have been most beneficial?
- school allowances
- monitoring finances
- successful financial planning
- long term financial planning

h) What aspects of Physical Assets have been most beneficial?
- knowing your plant
- understanding maintenance issues
- team planning with head custodian
- monitoring your plant

i) What aspects of The District Perspective have been most beneficial?
- media training
- legal issues
- transportation
- consulting services project
- maintenance project
- current policies
- special needs students

j) What aspects of Critical Self-appraisal have been most beneficial?
- strategies for initial self-appraisal
- developing personal goals
- managing change and transition
- behaving with integrity
- being a district principal
- knowing one's leadership style

4. Could you please comment on other aspects of the program that you felt to be beneficial
- mentorship
- networking
- professional reading section

5. Which teaching methodologies used during the program were most effective?

6. Were your expectations met?

7. Now that you have been a practicing principal, are there topics that you would add to the course?

8. Do you have any closing questions or comments that you would like to make about the course or about this interview?